

Report 2888



nps archaeology

Archaeological Watching Brief ahead of Geotechnical Sampling at Welcome Pit, Burgh Castle, Norfolk

ENF127922



Prepared for
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Location:	Welcome Pit Quarry extension, Burgh Castle, Norfolk
District:	Great Yarmouth
Planning Ref.:	Pre-application (Norfolk County Council)
Grid Ref.:	TG 4858 0434
HER No.:	ENF127922
OASIS Ref.:	116567
Client:	Folkes Plant and Aggregates Ltd
Dates of Fieldwork:	8 November 2011

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was conducted for Folkes Plant and Aggregates Ltd ahead of a geological borehole survey at Welcome Pit Quarry, Burgh Castle, Norfolk.

Eight small, rectangular test pits were excavated in advance of the drilling. The surface of the natural geology was encountered in each of the test pits. No archaeological features or deposits were encountered during the work.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

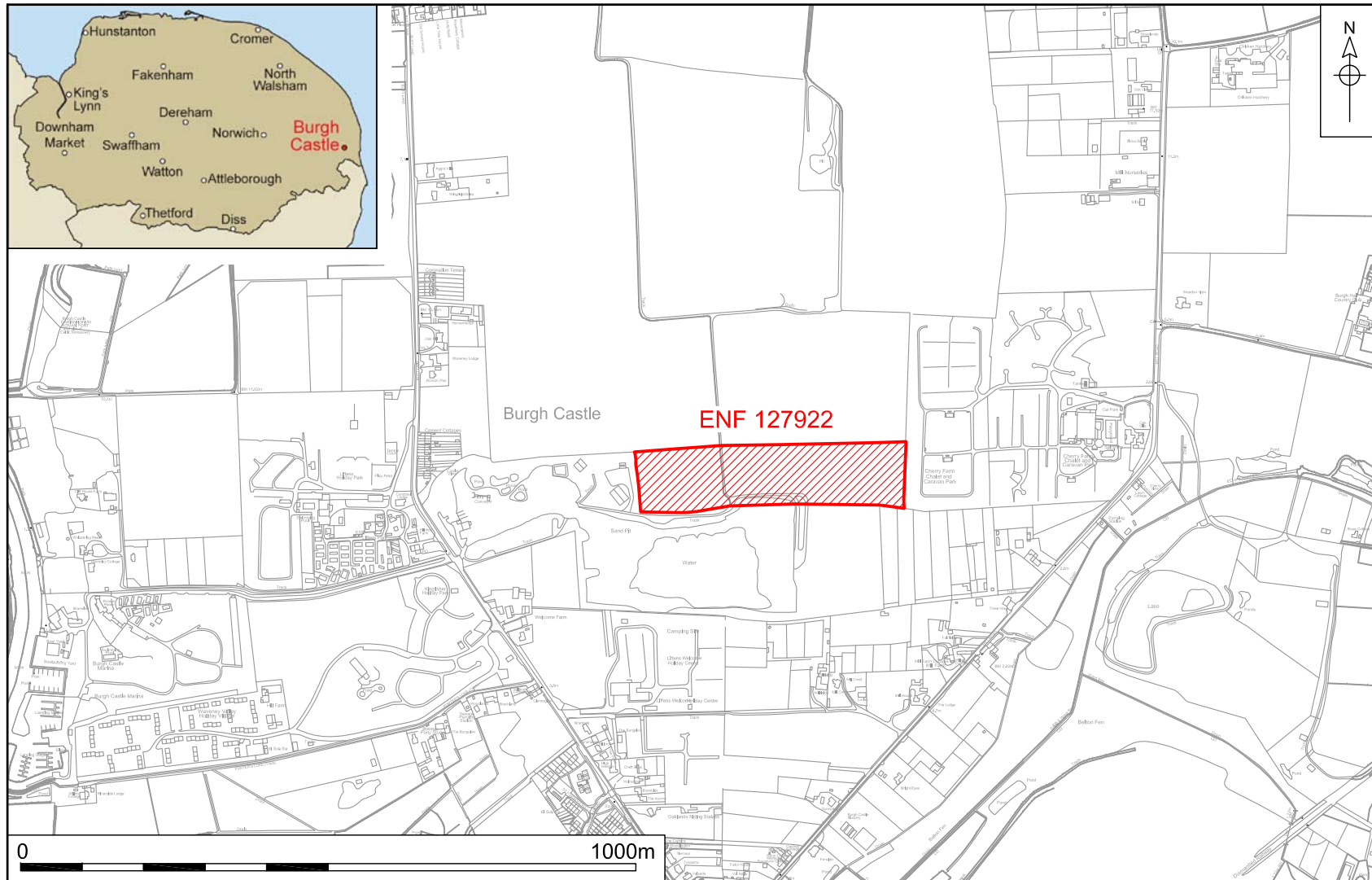
An Archaeological Watching brief was undertaken by NPS Archaeology at Welcome Pit Quarry, Burgh Castle, Norfolk (TG 4858 0434). The work was carried out in response to a planning condition for archaeological monitoring which had been applied to test pitting in advance of a geological borehole survey in the area of a possible extension to the quarry (Fig. 1).

The site lies within an area of cropmarks that are possibly associated with the Roman fort and its attached civilian settlement. Therefore, Norfolk Historic Environment Service recommended that a programme of archaeological monitoring be carried out during the test pitting works to record any further remains exposed.

This work was undertaken to fulfil a planning condition set by Norfolk County Council and a Brief issued by Norfolk Historic Environment Service (Ref. Ken Hamilton 19 October 2011 – ref: CNF43330). The work was conducted in accordance with a Project Design and Method Statement prepared by NPS Archaeology (Ref. NPSA/BAU2888/NP). This work was commissioned by Stephen M Daw Limited on behalf of Folkes Plant and Aggregates Ltd who funded the work.

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 *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment* (Department for Communities and Local Government 2010). The results will enable decisions to be made by the Mineral Planning Authority about the treatment of any archaeological remains found.

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.



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Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:10,000

2.0 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The solid geology at the site is Upper Cretaceous chalk. This is overlain by sands of the Happisburgh glacial formation. Soils in this area are typical brown earths of the Sheringham Hall series.

The site lies at an elevation of c.3m OD. It is situated on a gentle north-facing slope approximately 1km to the east of Burgh Castle Roman fort and the River Waveney. Land use at the site is currently one of arable agriculture.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A search of 500m radius centred on the proposed quarry extension was requested from the Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER) and the results summarised below.

Evidence for prehistoric activity

Isolated finds of flint implements and flakes have been found at NHERs 23798, 24168, 24917 and 49799 within the vicinity of the site. A flint implement was found immediately to the north of the site at NHER 21798, which is located within the same field as the test pits.

The eastern portion of the site lies within a group of cropmark field boundaries (NHER 45230) predominantly of late prehistoric or Roman date which are visible on aerial photographs. This large site covers 2km by approximately 1.5 km and is located to the east of Burgh Castle Roman fort. These field boundaries follow a similar alignment and arrangement as other large groups of cropmarks to the south-east (NHER 45215) and these are also thought to be late prehistoric in origin. A number of other multi-period fragmentary linear features and boundaries have also been recorded under record 45230 (Massey 2006).

Evidence for Roman activity

The Roman fort at Burgh Castle (HER 10471) is situated approximately 1km to the west of the site. The following description is taken from the recent desk-based assessment prepared for the proposed quarry extension (Sillwood 2012). The earliest reference to the monument is actually from the Roman period, with the fort, *Gariannonum*, mentioned in the *Notitia Dignitatum* which was compiled around AD 395. Burgh Castle is a Saxon Shore Fort, one of a chain of eleven running from Brancaster in north Norfolk (the northern limit) to Portchester in Hampshire in the south, and was constructed probably in the late 3rd century to counter the threat of Saxon raids. A large *vicus*, or civilian settlement, appears to have developed outside the walls of the fort at Burgh Castle, and many cropmarks are recorded in the area relating to this and later activities. Excavations within the fort between 1958 and 1961 by Charles Green helped to define the period of use of the fort, and it seems likely that the fort went out of use by the second quarter of the 4th century.

In AD 633 the East Anglian King Sigeberht invited an Irish monk, named Fursey, to settle with his followers at a place called *Cnobheresburg*. Bede described this as a wooded place not far from the sea and built in a Roman 'castle'. It is generally believed that the site of the monastery is Burgh Castle, although the evidence is not equivocal. Charles Green's excavations recorded a 5th-century hoard of

glassware contained within an iron-bound bucket, which had clearly been deposited after the abandonment of the fort. A Middle Saxon cemetery was excavated by Green within the south-west portion of the interior of the fort and traces of 7th- to 10th-century buildings were also recorded.

A Norman motte and bailey castle was constructed within the shore fort. The motte was demolished in the mid 19th century, but is visible as a cropmark on aerial photographs and as a faint earthwork. Metal detecting in 2010 recovered a sherd of Ipswich ware.

The cropmarks of a group of rectilinear enclosures and trackways of possible Roman or post-medieval date are visible on aerial photographs a short distance to the north-west of the site (NHER 49208). These cropmarks appear to follow the same alignment as the enclosures and boundaries associated with the Roman vicus to the immediate west (NHER 49204). It is therefore possible that these enclosures are the same date, however it must be noted that the alignment of the site also corresponds with that of the surrounding post-medieval field layout.

Isolated finds of Roman coins and brooches by metal detectorists have been made at NHERs 17948, 21798, 23798, 24167, 24917 and 49799 all of which lie within 500m of the site. A Roman coin was found within the area of the site at NHER 24168 and a further Roman coin within the same field immediately to the north of the site at NHER 18003.

Evidence for Medieval activity

Evidence for medieval activity within the vicinity of the site is in the form of metal work found by metal detectorists. A buckle and dagger guard were found at NHER 17948 immediately to the north of this site. A spur, coin, coin weight, strap end and buckle were recovered from NHER 49799 situated to the north-west of the site. From NHER 24168, which is situated within the bounds of the site, a buckle seal and coins were found. NHER 21798, located in the same field as the site produced coins and strap fittings.

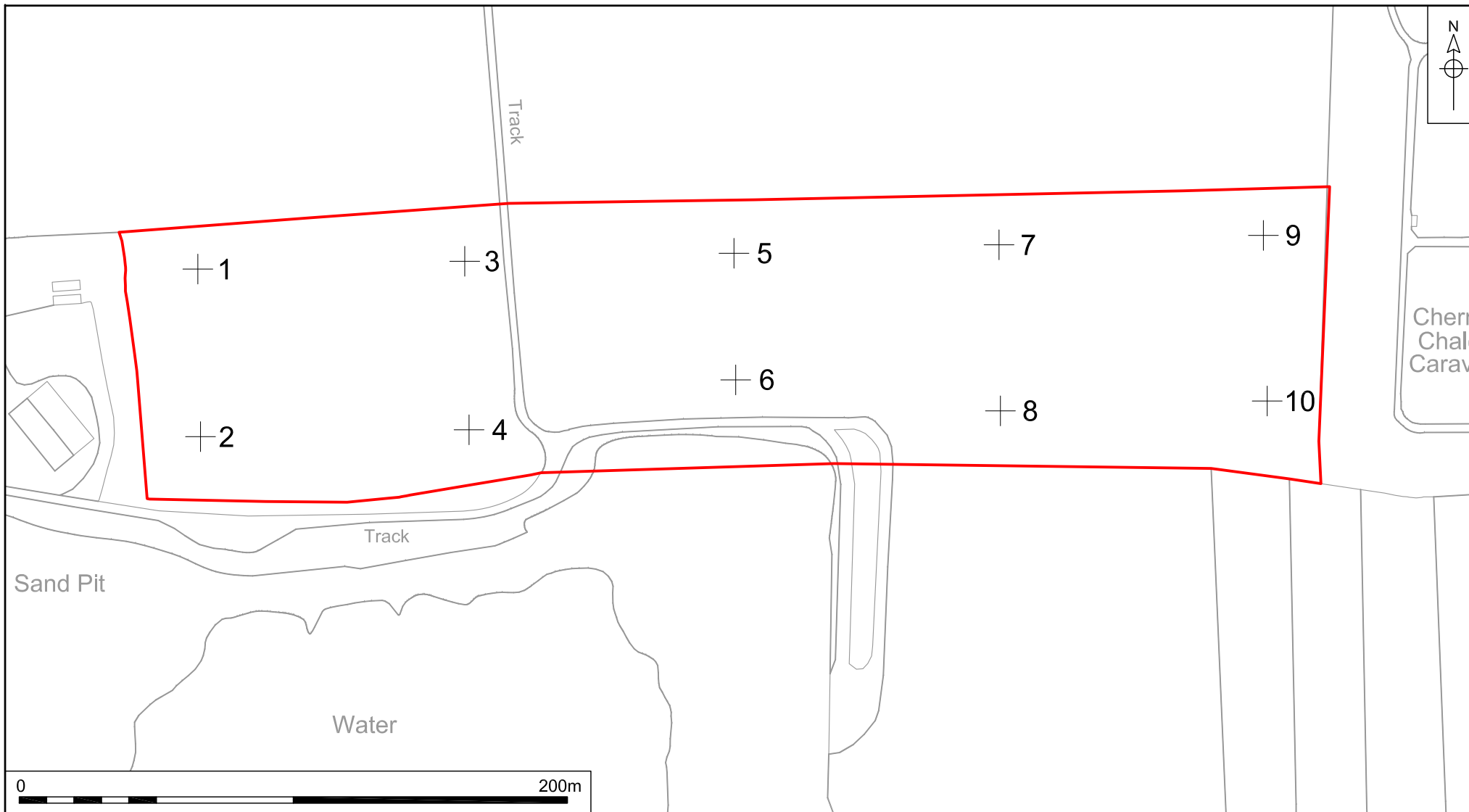
3.4 Evidence for Post-medieval activity

Evidence for post-medieval activity in the vicinity is also in the form of metal detected finds. A plethora of metal objects have been recovered representing casual losses by people working in and passing through the area.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

The geological borehole survey consisted of ten drilled boreholes distributed evenly over the site in order to establish the exact nature of the underlying geology. In advance of the drilling of each borehole a rectangular, machine excavated test pit was dug to expose archaeological deposits/features and/or the surface of the underlying natural geology. Two of the boreholes (1 and 2) were positioned within an area where the ground level was already considerably reduced and as a result did not require the excavation of a small test pit to expose the natural geology. The locations of the individual boreholes are illustrated in Fig. 2.

The objective of this watching brief was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence or absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.



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Figure 2. Location of boreholes 1 - 10. Scale 1:2000

The Brief required that constant archaeological monitoring of all ground investigation works be carried out.

Machine excavation was carried out with a wheeled JCB-type 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. Colour, monochrome and 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

The results of the monitoring of the test pits are presented below under numbered headings (each Test Pit shares the same number as the borehole) and can be seen in Fig. 2 (location) and Fig. 3 (plan and section).

Test Pits 1 and 2

Borehole numbers 1 and 2 were situated in an area located within the existing quarry complex. The ground here had previously been reduced to a level below the surface of the natural geology therefore any surviving archaeological deposits or features that may have survived there had been removed.

Test Pit 3

Pit 3 measured 1.60m from north to south and 0.70m from east to west. The surface of the natural geology was encountered at a depth of 0.40m and consisted of a bright orange sand. The sand was sealed by a mid brown sand silt topsoil [01] which contained rare chalk and charcoal flecks. No archaeological features or deposits were present in the pit.

Test Pit 4

Pit 4 measured 1.50m from east to west and 0.80m from north to south. The surface of the natural geology was encountered at a depth of 0.40m and consisted of a bright orange sand. The sand was sealed by a mid brown silt sand sub-soil [03] which contained rare charcoal flecks. This was sealed in turn by a mid brown sandy silt topsoil [01] with rare charcoal and ceramic building material flecks. No archaeological features or deposits were present in the pit.

Test Pit 5

Pit 5 measured 1.60m from east to west and 0.70m from north to south. The surface of the natural geology was encountered at a depth of 0.40m and consisted of a pale brown sand clay. This was sealed by a mid brown clay silt topsoil [02]. No archaeological features or deposits were present in the pit.

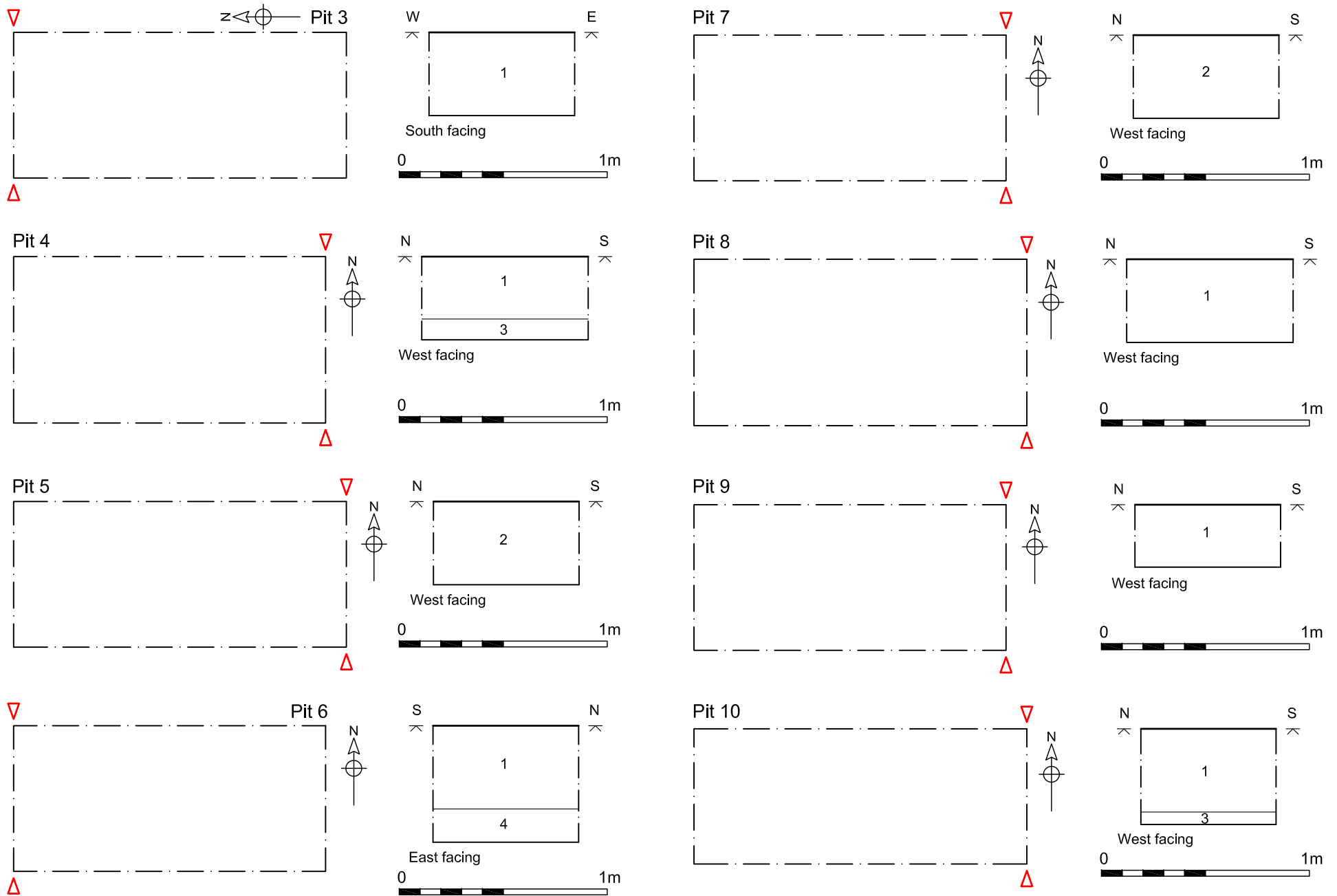


Figure 3. Plans and sections of Test Pits 3 - 10. Scale 1:20



Plate 1. Test Pit 4 looking south



Plate 2. Test Pit 6. looking north

Test Pit 6

Pit 6 measured 1.50m from east to west and 0.70m from north to south. The surface of the natural geology was encountered at a depth of 0.56m and consisted of a pale brown clay sand. The sand was sealed by a pale brown slightly clay sand

subsoil [04]. This was sealed in turn by a mid brown sandy silt topsoil [01] with rare occurrences of charcoal and ceramic building material flecks. No archaeological features or deposits were present in the pit.

Test Pit 7

Pit 7 measured 1.60m from east to west and 0.70m from north to south. The surface of the natural geology was encountered at a depth of 0.40m and consisted of a mixed deposit of pale brown clay with chalk flecking and an orange clay sand. This was sealed in turn by a pale brown clay silt topsoil [02]. No archaeological features or deposits were present in the pit.

Test Pit 8

Pit 8 measured 1.60m from east to west and 0.80m from north to south. The surface of the natural geology was encountered at a depth of 0.40m and consisted of a bright orange sand. The sand was sealed by a mid brown sand silt topsoil [01]. No archaeological features or deposits were present in the pit.

Test Pit 9

Pit 9 measured 1.50m from east to west and 0.70m from north to south. The surface of the natural geology was encountered at a depth of 0.30m and consisted of an orange clay sand. This was sealed by a mid brown sandy silt topsoil [01] with rare occurrences of charcoal and ceramic building material flecks. No archaeological features or deposits were present in the pit.

Test Pit 10

Pit 10 measured 1.60m from east to west and 0.65m from north to south. The surface of the natural geology was encountered at a depth of 0.46m and consisted of a bright orange sand. The sand was sealed by an orange brown silt sand subsoil [03]. This was sealed in turn by a mid brown sandy silt topsoil [01] with rare occurrences of flint pebbles. No archaeological features or deposits were present in the pit.

6.0 FINDS

No artefacts or ecofacts were recovered during the execution of this work.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

Although situated in an area potentially rich in archaeological remains no evidence was gathered during this work to suggest any were present at the site of the proposed quarry extension. This work however provided only a very limited opportunity to inspect the underlying deposits and is no guarantee that archaeological remains are absent at the location.

Acknowledgements

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The fieldwork was carried out by the author.

This report was edited by Jayne Bown and produced and illustrated by David Dobson.

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Appendix 1a: Context Summary

Context	Type	Description	Period
01	Deposit	Mid brown sand silt topsoil	Uncertain
02	Deposit	Brown clay silt topsoil	Uncertain
03	Deposit	Brown silt sand sub-soil	Uncertain
04	Deposit	Pale brown clay sand sub-soil	Uncertain