Report 3155

nps archaeology

Archaeological Excavation and Watching Brief at the West Acre Sewerage Treatment Works, River Road, West Acre, Norfolk

ENF130360

Prepared for
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Location:	West Acre Sewerage Treatment Works, River Road, West Acre, Norfolk
District:	King's Lynn and West Norfolk
Grid Ref.:	TF 7792 1494
HER No.:	ENF130360
OASIS Ref.:	145733
Client:	Anglian Water Services Ltd.
Dates of Fieldwork:	10-13 December 2012

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was conducted for Anglian Water Services Ltd during the installation of new sewerage treatment equipment at West Acre Sewerage Treatment Works in Norfolk.

No significant archaeological features or artefacts were exposed at the site during groundworks.

The only layer dating from before the modern era was a layer of old subsoil which was probably the result of intensive arable activity in the medieval or post-medieval period.

There is a huge amount of truncation within the sewerage treatment works and it seems unlikely that any significant medieval remains will have survived within the area occupied by the treatment works.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The installation of new sewage treatment equipment at West Acre Sewerage Treatment Works, River Road, West Acre, Norfolk was subjected to archaeological excavation while the connecting buried pipework was subjected to an archaeological watching brief. The total area affected was 0.06ha, all within the existing boundary of the West Acre Sewerage treatment works.

This work was undertaken to fulfil planning requirements set by Anglian Water Services and the Norfolk Historic Environment Service. The work was conducted in accordance with an Archaeological Brief prepared by Norfolk Historic Environment Service (NHES) (CNF44385_2, 31 July 2012) and a Project Design and Method Statement prepared by NPS Archaeology (01-04-13-2-1015, December 2012).This work was commissioned and funded by Anglian Water Services Limited.

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 *National Planning Policy Framework* (Department for Communities and Local Government 2012). The results will enable decisions to be made by the Local 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 Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service (NMAS), following the relevant policies on archiving standards.

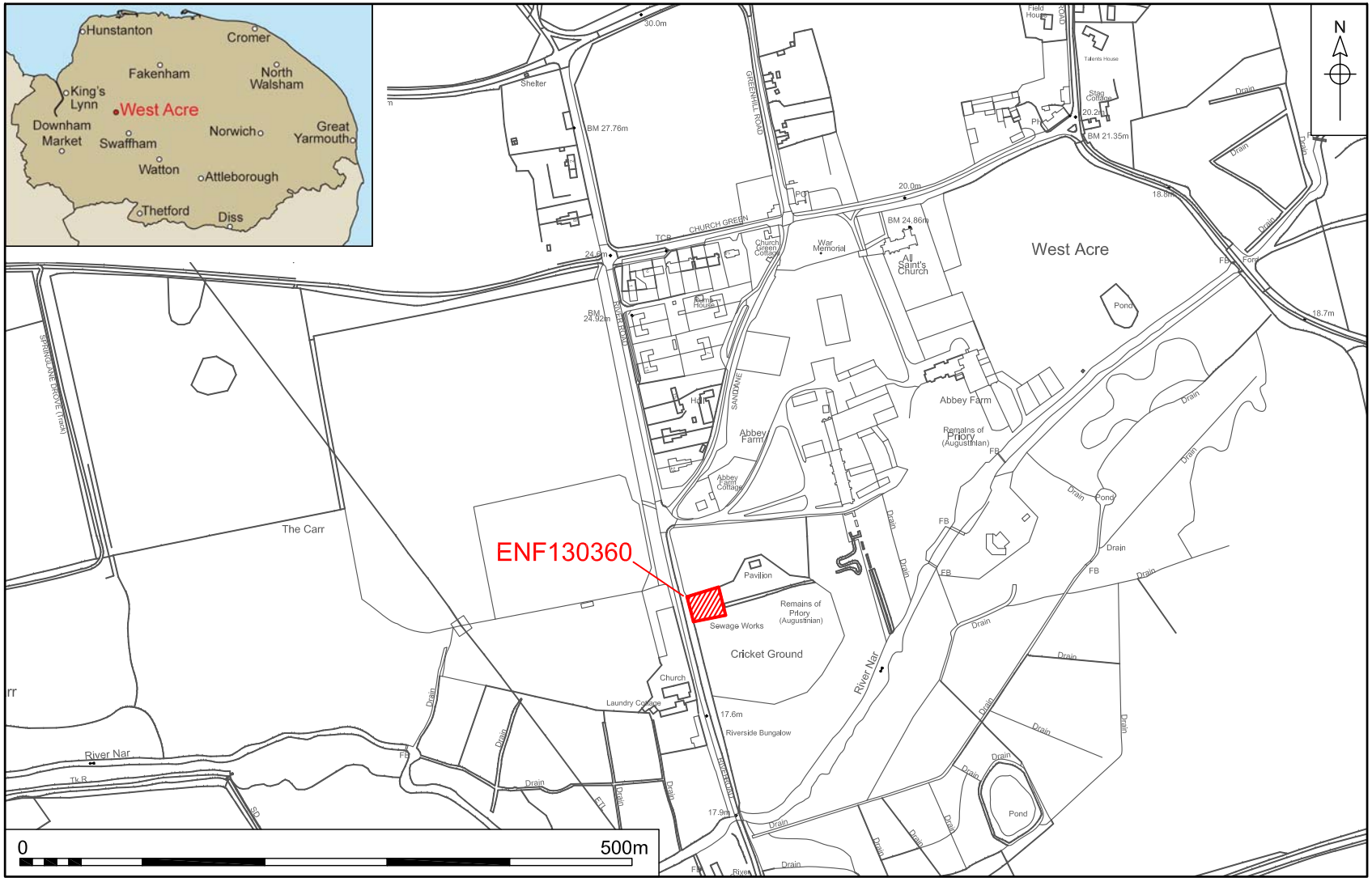

Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:5000

2.0 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The underlying geology consisted of Quaternary sands and gravels of the Lowestoft Formation above Cretaceous chalk bedrock of the Holywell Nodular Chalk Formation and New Pit Chalk Formation (http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/ geologyofbritain/ home.html).

The site was set on the western edge of the monastic compound of West Acre Priory, on the eastern edge of River Road in West Acre. It is located on the south-western edge of the modern village, on a shallow south-facing slope, 180m north of the River Nar. The site lies at a height of *c*.20m O.D.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER) and historic mapping resources have been consulted during the preparation of this section. The most relevant information is presented below in broadly chronological order

Prehistoric

A probable Bronze Age ring ditch is visible on aerial photographs (NHER 3953), 1km south-east of the sewerage treatment works. Neolithic and Early Bronze Age flint implements were recovered from the area in 1934 and Neolithic pottery fragments in 1963. Metal detecting and fieldwalking exercises between 1985 and 2012 have recovered a range of objects including prehistoric flints, pottery fragments from the Neolithic period onwards, Late Iron Age, Roman, medieval and post-medieval coins, and metal objects from the Bronze Age and Late Iron Age to post-medieval periods. These metal finds include a small hoard of Late Iron Age coins.

An aerial photograph taken prior to 1980 depicts a tiny rectangular cropmark (NHER 16580) 500m east of the sewerage treatment works. Investigation of the site of this cropmark found that it related to a well-preserved small barrow. It lies within the priory precinct.

Roman

In 1955 a Roman coin of Gallienus (NHER 3878) was recovered from a location 490m north-east of the sewerage treatment works.

Roman pots (NHER 3955), some containing human cremations were found in 1918 in the vicarage garden, 450m south of the sewerage treatment works.

Anglo-Saxon

A possible Early Saxon cremation cemetery (NHER 16841) lies 360m north of the sewerage treatment works. Aerial photographs of this area taken in 1977 showed the cropmarks of a possible Bronze Age ring ditch. Subsequent metal detecting during 1991-96 and 2005-07 recovered a large number of metalwork objects and coins. The quantity of Early Saxon artefacts (brooches, buckles, clasps, tweezers etc.) suggested that a cemetery might have been situated here.

Medieval

The sewerage treatment works lies within West Acre Priory (NHER 3881). The Augustinian Order built the medieval priory that stands here during the reign of

Henry I (1100-1135). It was in use until around 1538. The remains of the priory church, cloisters, chapter house, gatehouse, barn, and other buildings survive on site. In addition, extensive earthworks relating to this monastic compound can be observed. Excavations here during 1992-97 recovered various medieval masonry and objects, including pottery sherds, coins and roof tiles.

In 1980 a medieval jetton of French origin (NHER 16245) was found 375m north-west of the sewerage treatment works.

The Wooden House (NHER 16850), 330m north of the sewerage treatment works is a 15th- to 16th-century timber-framed house, in the style of a 'Wealden house', which is relatively rare in Norfolk. It has an open hall and jettied wings and an inserted plinth of reused stone from the medieval Priory.

Reused medieval stonework is present in many of the post-medieval buildings in the village (NHERs 18206-18210, 18212-18214).

Aerial photographs taken in 1991 show a number of earthwork features located 750m north-east of the sewerage treatment works. Investigation of the site in 1995 (NHER 29470) recorded two toft-like enclosures, pits and a raised platform as well as evidence of lime quarrying in the central area. Various finds were also recovered, including Late Saxon and medieval pottery sherds along with medieval bricks.

The barn (NHER 51953) located 150m north-east of the sewerage treatment works is late medieval in date and is built from flint with stone dressings and a slate roof. This building was perhaps part of former west or farm court of the Priory of St Mary and All Saints.

Post-medieval

All Saints' Church, West Acre (NHER 3889), 330m north-east of the sewerage treatment works, was built in 1638 by Sir Edward Barkham to commemorate his first election as Lord Mayor of London in 1621. It is of a 'debased' Gothic style with more up-to-date Classical features of the time. Some elements of the earlier medieval church may survive, for example the 14th-century chancel arch.

Abbey Farm House (NHER 52115), 275m north-east of the sewerage treatment works dates to the 18th century and possibly incorporates an earlier core formed from the monastic remains of the Priory of St Mary and All Saints.

The sewerage treatment works is a post Second World War installation (http://historic-maps.norfolk.gov.uk/)

Other archaeological work

Archaeological trial trenching some 450m north-east of the sewerage treatment works in 2006 revealed two probable drainage gullies of unknown date. A single sherd of Grimston-type ware pottery was recovered from the subsoil, as was a 19th-century musical instrument similar to a mouth harp (NHER 48027).

Metal detecting and fieldwalking to the north, south and especially north-west of the sewerage treatment works has recovered artefacts of Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman, Anglo-Saxon, Medieval and Post-Medieval date (NHERs 28744, 29720, 30877, 31165, 31170, 31883, 31884, 32813 and 32876).

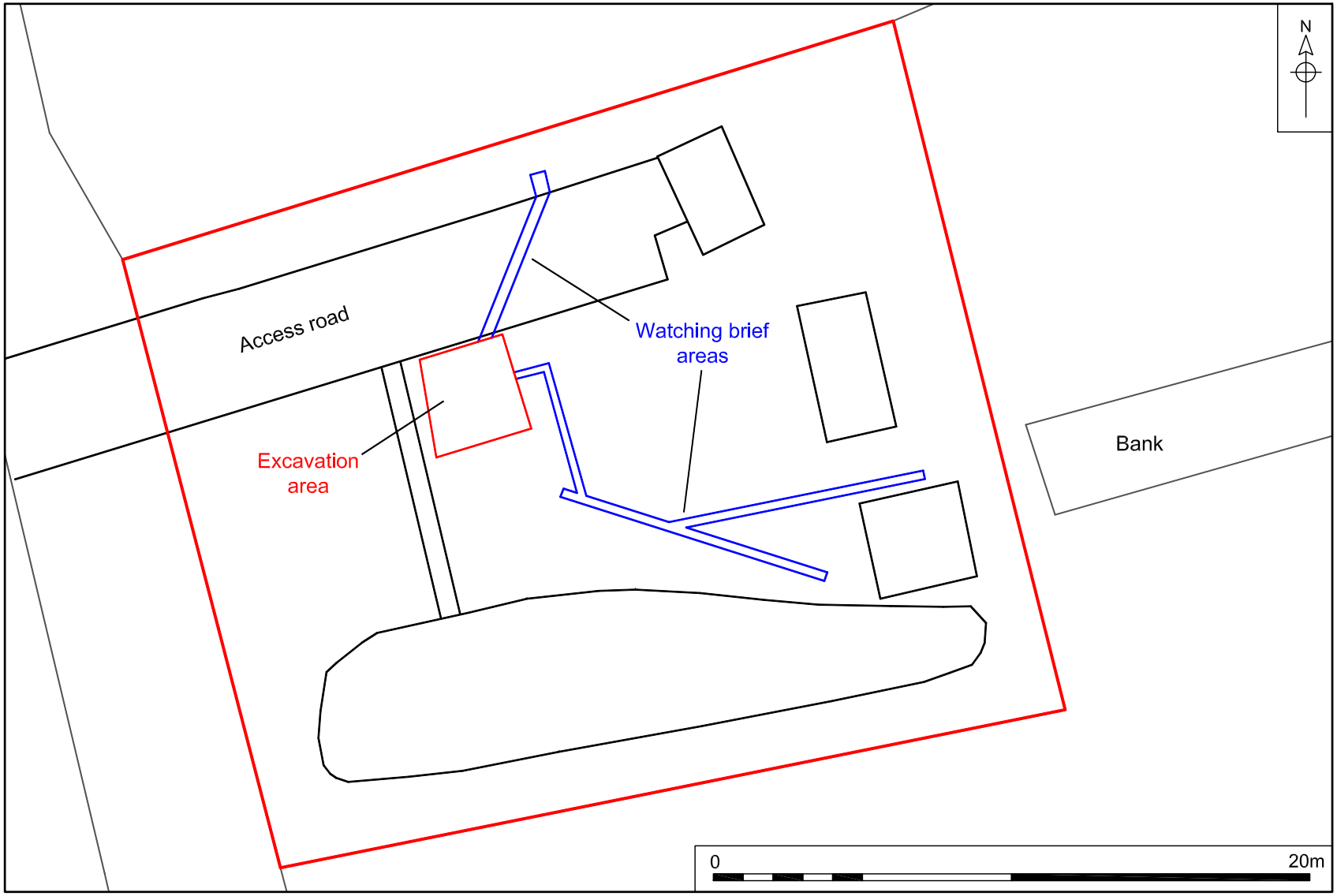

Figure 2. Location of excavation and watching brief areas. Scale 1:200

4.0 METHODOLOGY

The objective of this excavation and watching brief was to examine and record any archaeological remains that may be present within an area for installation of a new tank and record archaeological remains that may be exposed along the pipe routes within the development area (Fig. 2).

The Brief required that the footprint of the new sewerage treatment equipment be subject to archaeological excavation and any groundworks associated with the installation of connecting pipes be subject to an archaeological watching brief.

Machine excavation was carried out with a wheeled 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.

As there was a lack of suitable deposits, environmental samples were not 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 but very cold weather.

5.0 RESULTS

5.1 Excavation

The position of the new tank was moved north from its originally-planned position due to the unexpected presence of a large gravel filled soakaway. This feature was thought to have been located in the southern part of the sewerage treatment works, but was found to extend much further north than its plan indicated. The location finally decided upon clipped the northern edge of this soakaway which caused moderate flooding.

A 3m x 3m sub-square area was machine excavated under archaeological control to the depth of the natural yellow gravelly sand (Fig. 2, Plate 1).

No archaeological features were present.

The basal stratigraphy encountered consisted of a 0.35m thick layer of mid reddish brown sand subsoil (3) with moderate amounts flint gravel, occasional chalk lumps and flecks and sparse cattle bone (not retained).

Above deposit (3) was a 0.42m deep layer of mixed deposits (2) consisting of clean gravel, redeposited natural sand and occasional patches of black sand with moderate amounts of 20th-century brick fragments.

Above layer (2) was a 0.23m thick layer of dark brown sand (1) with frequent amounts of flint gravel and occasional fragments of 20th-century brick.

It is likely that layers (1) and (2) were late 20th-century in date, while layer (3) may have been a medieval and post-medieval layer of agricultural subsoil.

No artefacts were present

Plate 1. The excavation area facing north

5.2 Watching Brief

The eastern part of the sewerage works was occupied by a large artificial mound of modern construction. Most of the service trenches and pipework were located within the area of this mound and therefore only mound make-up (deposit (8)) was encountered (Plate 2). Deposit (8) was found to contain fragments of 20th-century brick and ceramic water pipe.

The only service trench that did not impact on the artificial mound ran north from the excavation area to a control kiosk on the northern side of the access track (Fig. 2, Plate 3). This trench was 0.40m wide and 0.50m deep. The earliest deposit encountered was compacted dark brown sand (7) with very frequent amounts of flint gravel.

Above deposit (7) was a 0.10m thick layer of compacted dark brown sandy topsoil (6) with moderate flint gravel.

Above (6) was a 0.28m thick layer of compacted gravelly make-up (5) containing 20th-century brick fragments.

Uppermost layer (4) comprised packed crushed tarmac. The compacted nature of the deposits and severe frosty conditions meant that hand excavation of this trench was extremely difficult.

It seems likely that all the deposits encountered were of modern date.

No artefacts were present.

Plate 2. The service trench running across the southern slope of the mound, facing west

Plate 3. The trench across the access track, facing north-west

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

No significant archaeological features or artefacts were encountered at this site. The only layer dating from before the modern era was a layer of old subsoil, probably the result of intensive arable activity in the medieval or post-medieval period.

A bank present within the neighbouring priory complex looked as if it should continue into the sewerage treatment works, but it seems likely that sewerage installations have completely truncated it within the boundary of the site.

There appears to have been a large amount of truncation within the sewerage treatment works.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Clive Fuller and his staff for their help and cooperation during the fieldwork phase of this project.

David Robertson of NHES produced the project brief.

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

Bibliography and Sources

Department for Communities and Local Government 2012 *National Planning Policy Framework*

http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyviewer_google/googleviewer.html Accessed 12.02.2013

http://historic-maps.norfolk.gov.uk/ Accessed 12.02.2013

Appendix 1: Context Summary

Context	Category	Cut Type	Fill Of	Description	Period
1	Deposit			Make-up	Modern
2	Deposit			Make-up	Modern
3	Deposit			reddish brown sand subsoil	Unknown
4	Deposit			Crushed tarmac track surface	Modern
5	Deposit			Make-up	Modern
6	Deposit			dark brown sandy topsoil	Unknown
7	Deposit			dark brown gravelly sand	Unknown
8	Deposit			Mound make-up	Modern

Appendix 2: OASIS Summary Report

OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

Printable version

OASIS ID: norfolka1-145733

Project details

Project name	West Acre Sewerage Treatment Works
Short description of the project	An archaeological watching brief was conducted for Anglian Water Services Ltd during the installation of new sewerage treatment equipment at West Acre Sewerage Treatment Works in Norfolk. No significant archaeological features or artefacts were exposed at the site during groundworks. The only layer dating from before the modern era was a layer of old subsoil which was probably the result of intensive arable activity in the medieval or post-medieval period. There is a huge amount of truncation within the sewerage treatment works and it seems unlikely that any significant medieval remains will have survived in the area occupied by the treatment works.
Project dates	Start: 10-12-2012 End: 13-12-2012
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	ENF130360 - HER event no.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Transport and Utilities 3 - Utilities
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Open-area excavation","Watching Brief"
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS

Project location

Country	England
Site location	NORFOLK KINGS LYNN AND WEST NORFOLK WEST ACRE West Acre Sewerage Treatment Works, River Road
Study area	15.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TF 7792 1494 52 0 52 42 08 N 000 38 00 E Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation	NPS Archaeology
Project brief originator	Norfolk Historic Environment Service
Project design originator	NPS Archaeology
Project director/manager	David Whitmore
Project supervisor	Steve Hickling
Type of sponsor/funding body	Utility
Name of sponsor/funding body	Anglian Water Services Ltd

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	NPS Archaeology
Digital Contents	"other"
Digital Media available	"Images vector","Text","Images raster / digital photography"
Paper Archive recipient	Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service
Paper Contents	"other"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet","Plan","Report","Section"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
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