

Report 3176



nps archaeology

**Archaeological Watching Brief along part of the
Northwold to Watton Reinforcement Scheme,
Norfolk**

ENF129834



Prepared for
UK Power Networks
Unit 407 Coppersmith Way
Gateway 11 Business Park
Wymondham
Norfolk
NR18 0WY

Steve Hickling BA MA AIfA

March 2013



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PROJECT CHECKLIST		
Project Manager	Nigel Page	
Draft Completed	Steve Hickling	14/11/2012
Graphics Completed	David Dobson	06/12/2012
Edit Completed	Jayne Bown	20/03/2013
Signed Off	Nigel Page	20/03/2013
<i>Issue 1</i>		

NPS Archaeology

Scandic House
85 Mountergate
Norwich
NR1 1PY

T 01603 756150

F 01603 756190

E jayne.bown@nps.co.uk

www.nau.org.uk

BAU 3176 01-04-13-2-1135

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Contents

<i>Summary</i>	1
1.0 Introduction	1
2.0 Geology and Topography	3
3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background.....	3
4.0 Methodology	4
5.0 Results.....	6
5.1 Easement and Cable Trench.....	6
5.2 Drill Pit 1	7
5.3 Drill Pit 2.....	7
6.0 Archaeological Material.....	8
6.1 Flint.....	8
7.0 Conclusions	8
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	9
<i>Bibliography and Sources</i>	9
Appendix 1: Context Summary	10
Appendix 2a: Finds by Context	10
Appendix 2b: Oasis Finds Summary.....	10
Appendix 3: OASIS Report Summary	11

Figures

Figure 1 Site location

Figure 2 Location of Cable Trench and Drill Pits

Plates

Plate 1 Cable trench and easement, facing north-east

Plate 2 Drill Pit 2, facing north-east (note the drill head to the right)

Location: Thetford Road, Northwold, Norfolk
District: King's Lynn and West Norfolk
Grid Ref.: TL 7440 9921 – TL 7380 9792
HER No.: ENF129834
OASIS Ref.: 145764
Client: UK Power Networks
Dates of Fieldwork: 29 October – 12 November 2012

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was conducted for UK Power Networks during the laying of a buried electricity cable at Northwold, along the route of the Northwold to Watton Reinforcement Scheme in Norfolk.

No significant archaeological features were revealed during the monitoring.

Prehistoric worked flint found in the topsoil of the easement strip suggests that there may have been Late Neolithic or Bronze Age activity in this area. The presence of ring ditches visible on aerial photographs of this area, and of Bronze Age items found in the valley bottom suggests this area was particularly rich in Bronze Age activity (perhaps of a ritual nature).

1.0 INTRODUCTION

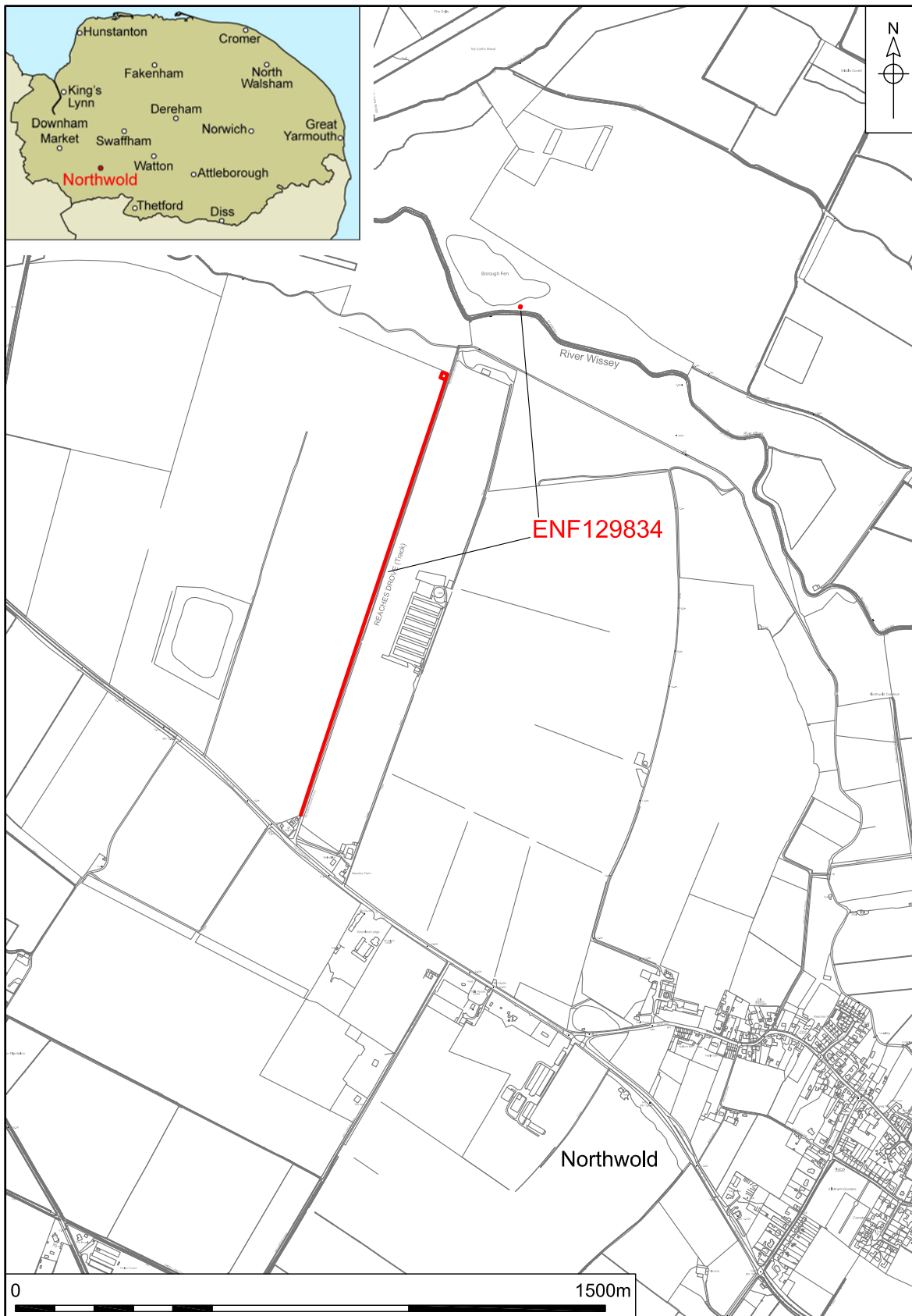
Ground works associated with the replacement of an overhead electricity cable by an underground cable at the crossing of the River Wissey at Northwold, and the run from the river to the substation were archaeologically monitored. The groundworks consisted of directional drill pits either side of the river and an open-cut cable trench between the river and the substation.

This work was undertaken to fulfil a brief set by the Norfolk Historic Environment Service (CNF44439). The work was conducted in accordance with a Project Design and Method Statement prepared by NPS Archaeology (NAU/BAU3176/NP).

This work was commissioned and funded by UK Power Networks.

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.



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Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:15,000

2.0 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The underlying geology consists of Lowestoft Formation Quaternary glacial deposits above Holywell Nodular or New Pit Cretaceous Chalk Formations (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).

The site lies between the A134 Thetford to King's Lynn road and the River Wissey, one mile north-west of the village of Northwold, at an elevation of 21m OD at the road end. The route sloped down to the north towards the River Wissey.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Data held by the Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER) and historic mapping sources have been consulted during the preparation of this section.

The results are presented in broadly chronological order.

Prehistoric

A human lower jaw bone (NHER 4735) was found in Borough Fen, at the northern end of the cable route, by a mechanical dredger. It may date to the Bronze Age.

In 1975 a Bronze Age spearhead (NHER 4795) with a leaf-shaped blade was recovered 400m south-east of the northern end of the cable route.

Artefacts of Bronze Age to post-medieval date (NHER 17292) have been found 500m south-east of the northern end of the cable route by a metal detectorist. These finds include a Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age razor, the tip of a Bronze Age rapier, an early Iron Age ring headed pin, the head of an Iron Age involuted pin and two Iron Age coins

In the summer of 1976 cropmarks seen from the ground showed two dark circles (possible ring ditches) (NHER 22960) somewhere in the field to the east of the cable route, on the hillock.

In July 1986 aerial photography recorded cropmarks indicating a single ring ditch (NHER 22995) cut by the apparently recent re-alignment of a field fence and widened road-side verge, 200m north-west of the southern end of the cable route. It may date to the Bronze Age.

Aerial photographs taken in 1975, 1989 and 1991 identified the cropmark of a ring ditch (NHER 29471) 500m south-east of the northern end of the cable route. A site visit in 1998 confirmed the feature as a flat topped mound with a circular ditch.

The butt end of a Bronze Age copper alloy rapier (NHER 29773) was found by a metal detectorist 400m south-east of the northern end of the cable route.

Aerial photography in 1946 recorded the cropmark of a ring ditch (NHER 32251) 830m west of the cable route. Further analysis of the site in 2006 showed a second ring ditch here, with these Bronze Age features also being visible from ground level.

Aerial photography in June 1975 identified a rather vague cropmark (NHER 39711) 400m south-east of the northern end of the cable route which may indicate a Bronze Age ring ditch.

Aerial photography in June 1975 very clearly showed the cropmark of a ring ditch (NHER 39712) 500m north-west of the southern end of the cable route. A site visit in June 2006 showed it to be about 20m in diameter and easily visible at ground level.

Roman

A Roman cosmetic palette, 55 Roman coins and many fragments of Roman pottery (NHER 17292) (perhaps indicating an important Roman settlement site) have been recorded 500m south-east of the northern end of the cable route by a metal detectorist.

Anglo-Saxon

A Middle Saxon pin and a Late Saxon strap end (NHER 17292) have been found 500m south-east of the northern end of the cable route by a metal detectorist.

Metal-detecting in April 2010 at the northern end of the cable route recovered a Late Saxon coin pierced four times (NHER 60338).

Medieval

Metal detecting in August 1992 recovered a beautifully engraved 13th-century lead seal matrix in almost mint condition (NHER 29191) 530m west of the southern end of the cable route.

Metal-detecting in 2010 revealed a medieval zoomorphic buckle (NHER 60338) at the northern end of the cable route.

A Henry III penny minted in London (NHER 62635) was found 750m west of the cable route.

Post-medieval

The Northwold Tithe Map (c.1840) shows the lane (Reaches Drove) as existing and the field pattern much the same as the modern field pattern, but with more boundaries in existence. The field system is similar to that to be expected in areas of parliamentary enclosure (<http://historic-maps.norfolk.gov.uk/mapexplorer/>).

The 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map names the lane as Reaches Drove. The area around the River at the northern of the trench is called Borough Fen and labelled as 'liable to flood' (<http://historic-maps.norfolk.gov.uk/mapexplorer/>).

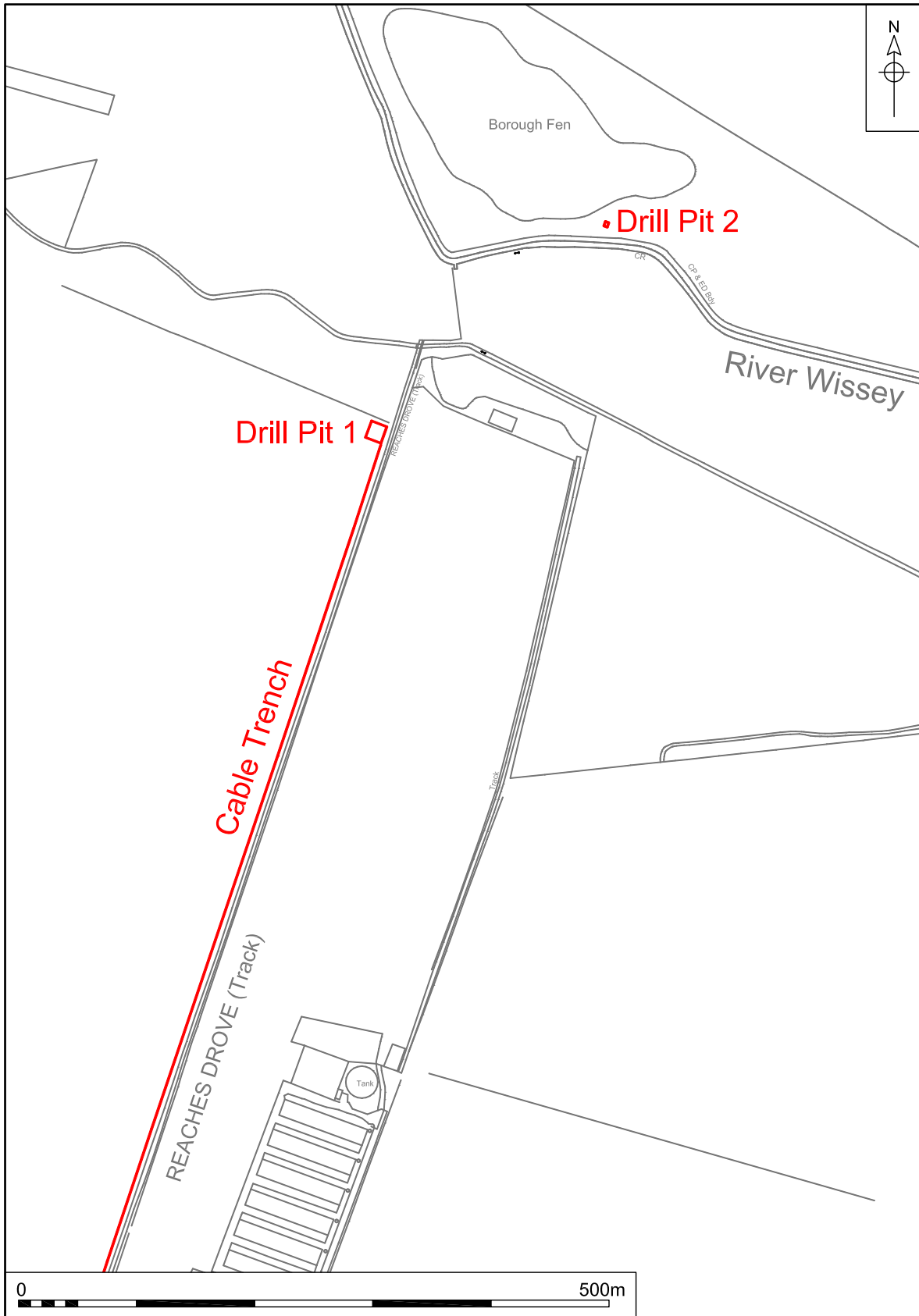
4.0 METHODOLOGY

The objective of this watching brief was to record any archaeological remains affected by ground works associated with the route of the cable trench from the A134 to the River Wissey and two directional drill pits (Drill Pit 1 and Drill Pit 2) on either bank (Fig. 2). An easement along the cable route was stripped prior to excavation of the cable trench.

The Brief required that the groundworks should be viewed regularly.

Machine excavation was carried out with a hydraulic 360° excavator.

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.



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Figure 2. Location of Cable Trench and Drill Pits. Scale 1:5000

The absence of suitable deposits precluded environmental samples being taken.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using NPS Archaeology pro forma. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales. 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

5.1 Easement and Cable Trench

The whole of the easement route and approximately half of the cable trench were monitored.

Two service trenches perpendicular to the pipe trench were apparent towards the southern end of the monitored route.

These trenches had vertical sides and were filled with backfilled topsoil, natural chalk and red sand. One of the trenches had a wooden plank laid longitudinally along it. The preservation of the wood and the morphology of the trench suggest a 20th-century date for these features.

Stratigraphy consisted of 0.40m of topsoil lying directly above natural chalk.

Topsoil (1), a dark brown clayey sand with occasional flint gravel contained fragments of burnt and worked flint. This flint probably dates to the Late Neolithic or Bronze Age.

The natural chalk containing patches of reddish brown sand



Plate 1. Cable trench and easement, facing north-east

5.2 Drill Pit 1

Drill pit 1 was located on the southern side of the River Wissey.

Drill Pit 1 was viewed after excavation, whilst drilling was taking place. Despite the drill pit being liberally plastered with drill lubricant, it was possible to ascertain that the topsoil here was 0.60m deep, with natural yellow sand beneath.

5.3 Drill Pit 2

Drill pit 2 was located on the northern side of the River Wissey.

The excavation of Drill Pit 2 was monitored. The stratigraphy consisted topsoil above redeposited natural sand, above peat (Plate 2).

Dark brown sandy topsoil (2) was 0.20m thick.

Topsoil (2) sealed 0.10m of redeposited natural sand (3).

Redeposited sand (3) lay above black sandy peat (4) that contained hazel and alder branches to a depth of at least 1.8m below ground level.



Plate 2. Drill Pit 2, facing north-east (note the drill head to the right)

6.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL MATERIAL

by Rebecca Sillwood

Three pieces of flint were recovered during the monitoring work. These finds were processed and recorded by count and weight, and information was entered onto an Excel spreadsheet outlining broad dating.

A table showing finds ordered by context can be found in Appendix 2a.

6.1 Flint

Two pieces of worked flint were recovered from topsoil (1) during stripping of the easement. Both are secondary waste flakes, and of a similar honey-coloured raw material. The pieces are likely to be of Late Neolithic to Bronze Age date.

A single fragment of burnt flint was also recovered from the topsoil. This piece of flint weighs 120g. Heated flint could be used to raise the temperature of liquids from the prehistoric period onwards. The piece has since been discarded.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

No significant archaeological features were revealed by this project.

The prehistoric worked flint found in the topsoil of the easement strip hints at Late Neolithic or Bronze Age activity in this general area and does not contradict pre-existing information in the vicinity for the Bronze Age, notably the presence of ring ditches (recorded on aerial photographs) and artefacts found in the valley bottom. Such evidence indicates that this area was rich in Bronze Age activity possibly of a ritual nature.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Paul Janz and Geoff Cole of Carillion for their help and cooperation.

James Albone of Norfolk Historic Environment Service (NHES) prepared the archaeological brief.

The fieldwork was carried out by the author.

The finds were processed, recorded and reported on by Rebecca Sillwood.

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 02.10.2012

<http://historic-maps.norfolk.gov.uk/mapexplorer> Accessed 02.10.2012

Appendix 1: Context Summary

Context	Category	Cut Type	Fill Of	Description	Period
1	Deposit			Topsoil along easement	Modern
2	Deposit			Topsoil in Drill Pit 2	Modern
3	Deposit			Redeposited natural sand in Drill Pit 2	Modern
4	Deposit			Peat in Drill Pit 2	-

Appendix 2a: Finds by Context

Context	Material	Qty	Wt	Period	Notes
1	Flint – Burnt	1	120g	Prehistoric	DISCARDED
1	Flint – Struck	2	8g	Prehistoric	

Appendix 2b: Oasis Finds Summary

Period	Material	Total
Prehistoric	Flint – Burnt	1
Prehistoric	Flint – Struck	2

Appendix 3: OASIS Report Summary

OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

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OASIS ID: norfolka1-145764

Project details

Project name	Archaeological Watching Brief along the Northwold to Watton Reinforcement Scheme, Norfolk
Short description of the project	An archaeological watching brief was conducted for UK Power Networks during the laying of a buried electricity cable at Northwold, along the route of the Northwold to Watton Reinforcement Scheme in Norfolk. No significant archaeological features were revealed during the monitoring. Prehistoric worked flint found in the topsoil of the easement strip suggests that there may have been Late Neolithic or Bronze Age activity in this area. The presence of ring ditches visible on aerial photographs of this area, and of Bronze Age items found in the valley bottom suggests this area was particularly rich in Bronze Age activity (perhaps of a ritual nature).
Project dates	Start: 29-10-2012 End: 12-11-2012
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	ENF129834 - HER event no.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Cultivated Land 4 - Character Undetermined
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	STRUCK FLINT Late Prehistoric
Significant Finds	BURNT FLINT Late Prehistoric
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS

Project location

Country	England
Site location	NORFOLK KINGS LYNN AND WEST NORFOLK NORTHWOLD Northwold to Watton Reinforcement main, Reaches Drove
Study area	1200.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TL 7440 9921 52 0 52 33 44 N 000 34 23 E Line
Site coordinates	TL 7380 9792 52 0 52 33 03 N 000 33 49 E Line

Project creators

Name of Organisation	NPS Archaeology
Project brief originator	Norfolk Historic Environment Service
Project design originator	NPS Archaeology
Project director/manager	Nigel Page
Project supervisor	Steve Hickling
Type of sponsor/funding body	Utility
Name of sponsor/funding body	UK Power Networks

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service
Physical Contents	"Worked stone/lithics"
Digital Archive recipient	NPS Archaeology
Digital Contents	"Worked stone/lithics","other"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography","Images vector","Spreadsheets","Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service
Paper Contents	"Worked stone/lithics","other"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet","Report"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Archaeological Watching Brief along part of the Northwold to Watton Reinforcement Scheme, Norfolk
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Hickling, S.
Other bibliographic details	Report 3176
Date	2013
Issuer or publisher	NPS Archaeology
Place of issue or publication	Norwich
Description	A4 paper, double-sided, colour-printed, spiral-bound; PDF
Entered by	Jayne Bown (jayne.bown@nps.co.uk)

Entered on 20 March 2013

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