

NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

Report No. 1204

An Archaeological Watching Brief at Land adjacent to the George and Dragon public house, The Street, Thurton, Norfolk

45391 THT

Project overseen by:	Please tick
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July 2006

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Location:	Land adjacent to the George and Dragon public house, The Street, Thurton, Norfolk
District:	
Grid Ref:	TG 32787 00899
HER No.:	45391 THT
Date of fieldwork:	18th & 19th July 2006

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out on the former car park of the George and Dragon public house in Thurton during excavation of footings for a new dwelling and a garage. No features or finds of archaeological interest were observed in the footing trenches and no archaeological material was collected because no closely datable material was observed.

1.0 Introduction

An archaeological watching brief to monitor groundworks during the excavation of footing trenches for a new dwelling with garage was carried out on land adjacent to the George and Dragon pub, Thurton, Norfolk. The area of groundworks consisted of approximately 150m² with a separate additional area of approximately 25m² for the garage. The work was commissioned by Kinsman Developments Ltd of Norfolk.

The site to be developed lies on the edge of Thurton Common. This is a location with a potential for evidence of medieval settlement particularly on the street frontage. The adjacent George and Dragon public house (Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER) No. 32076) is believed to be a late medieval hall house in origin with an 18th main block.

Early cartography such as Faden's map of 1797 does not show the area in sufficient detail to determine the land-use for the site. The building marked on the map in this location is the George and Dragon itself. The Enclosure Map of 1806 shows the area to the south of the pub as open ground and possibly part of an adjoining paddock or garden. Bryant's map of 1826 contains less detail (it names the pub as 'George Inn') but also shows the area south of the pub as open ground.

The site is located in an area of boulder clay and glacial sands and gravels over London Clay (Funnell 1994) ,and lies at 11.77m OD.

Areas of archaeological interest surrounding the site recorded in the Norfolk Historic Environment Record include: a large Bronze Age ring ditch and field system 250m to the north-west (NHER 23743), a group of Bronze Age barrows and ring ditches approximately 500m to the west (NHER Nos 10308 to 10312), the findspots of a Late Saxon brooch, several medieval coins and a buckle 200m to the south (NHER 1663/37428), and St Ethelbert's church (NHER 1665). No previous formal archaeological work has been carried out here.

This archaeological watching brief was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA Ref: AJRH 20/03/03). The site archive is currently held by NAU Archaeology and will be deposited with Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service in due course, in accordance with the relevant policy on archiving standards.

The objective of this watching brief was to record any archaeological evidence revealed during the excavation of footing trenches for a new house. The Brief required that an archaeologist be in constant attendance during the groundworks and use a metal detector to scan the spoil for any metal artefacts of archaeological interest.

The building contractors excavated the footing trenches using a JCB-type mechanical excavator with a 0.90m wide toothed bucket for the main trenches and a 0.50m wide bucket for the connecting trenches.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using the Norfolk Archaeological Unit's *pro-forma* sheets. Plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of relevant deposits.

Site access was good. Weather was hot and bright with loose dry topsoil being blown about during excavation.

2.0 Observations

The excavation of the footing trenches started at the street frontage and continued towards the north-west edge of the site, finishing with the garage footings. The depth of the trenches was on average 0.90m, the width of the main supporting wall footings was 0.90m and the internal walls 0.50m wide.

The site, the former car park of the public house, was covered with a loose sandy silt containing frequent flint pebbles, (1). Beneath this was a layer of hardcore brick rubble, (2), up to 0.40m thick, across approximately 75% of the site, presumed to be the base for the car park.

Beneath the brick rubble in the south-western part of the area was a deposit of dark grey or black sandy silt, (5), which continued to the base of the trench in several places. This deposit was on average up to 0.40m thick and extended across the sections of the footings in the centre and to the south-west of the site. It contained brick and slate tile fragments, with occasional fragments of vegetable material such as twigs, and had faint smell of sulphides, from decayed organic matter. Beneath this deposit was a pale cream coloured natural sand, (7).

In the south-east corner of the site a thin deposit of mid grey-brown sandy silt, (3), 0.10m thick, and approximately 3m long in section, was observed between the brick rubble and the dark organic deposit. In the east to west footings at the centre of the site a different deposit was observed between the brick rubble and dark deposit. This was a 0.10m thick layer of black ashy silt, (4), with coal and clinker fragments, which extended through a c.3.5m length in section.

A separate set of footings for a garage were excavated approximately 10m to the north-west of the house; these consisted of three linked trenches 0.50m in width and 0.90m deep, which were excavated through the 0.10m thick stony sandy silt on the surface, (1), and through a 0.80m thick single mid brown sandy silt deposit, (6), down to the natural sand at the base of the footings. Deposit (6) was fairly homogenous in texture and colour and contained occasional fragments of glass and brick as well as numerous roots and was presumed to be post-medieval or modern imported garden soil.

No features were observed in any of the sections during the excavations of the footings. The spoil from the trenches was thoroughly scanned with a metal detector but the only items recovered by this method were modern fragments of copper wire and iron nails. Hand searching of the spoil also failed to produce anything of archaeological interest, the only artefacts found were an occasional fragment of clay pipe or modern glass, post-medieval pottery was noticeable through its absence. Therefore, no archaeological material was collected in the field

3.0 Conclusions

Despite the potential for exposing remains associated with the medieval development of the village during the groundworks, no features or finds of archaeological interest were observed. Only modern material was observed or detected within the deposits encountered during the excavation of the footing trenches. The ground in the area of the site appeared to have been disturbed in the recent past by the consolidation of imported soil and brick rubble to make a hard-standing for the purpose of a car park. The single deposit in the north-west area of the site was most likely a post-medieval or modern imported garden soil.

The dark semi-organic material observed beneath the brick rubble appeared to be post-medieval or modern in date due to the presence of fragments of brick and roof slate. It resembled a flood deposit or the base of a backfilled pond and as the area is on the line of Carleton Beck running north-east to south-west, it may have been an area of standing water at some point, although this is not shown on the historic maps.

Alternatively, an alluvial silt from a dredged pond or river may have been imported to the site and compacted to provide makeup for the ground, either for previous land use or the hardstanding used as a car park.

The cartographic evidence shows that there were no buildings on the site in the late 18th and early 19th centuries and the site may have been part of the local agricultural system until annexed later for other uses. It appears that land-use in the late post-medieval and modern periods may have impaired the survival of any archaeological evidence for medieval settlement in the area of the site.

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- | | | |
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| Barringer, J.C. | 1998 | <i>An Introduction to Bryant's map of Norfolk</i> (Lark Press, Dereham). |

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Funnell, B.	2005	in T. Ashwin & A. Davison (eds.), <i>An Historical Atlas of Norfolk</i> (Phillimore, Cambridge), 4-5.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank site agent Mr Kevin Lawn for his co-operation and interest during the watching brief. Site information was provided by Jan Allen (NLA) and Kenneth Penn. The report was illustrated and produced by Julie Curl and edited by Andy Hutcheson.

Appendix 1: Context Summary

Context	Category	Description
1	D	Stony sand/silt
2	D	Brick rubble
3	D	Mid grey sandy silt
4	D	Black ash with coal and clinker
5	D	Dark compact organic silt
6	D	Mid brown sandy silt
7	D	Pale cream sand

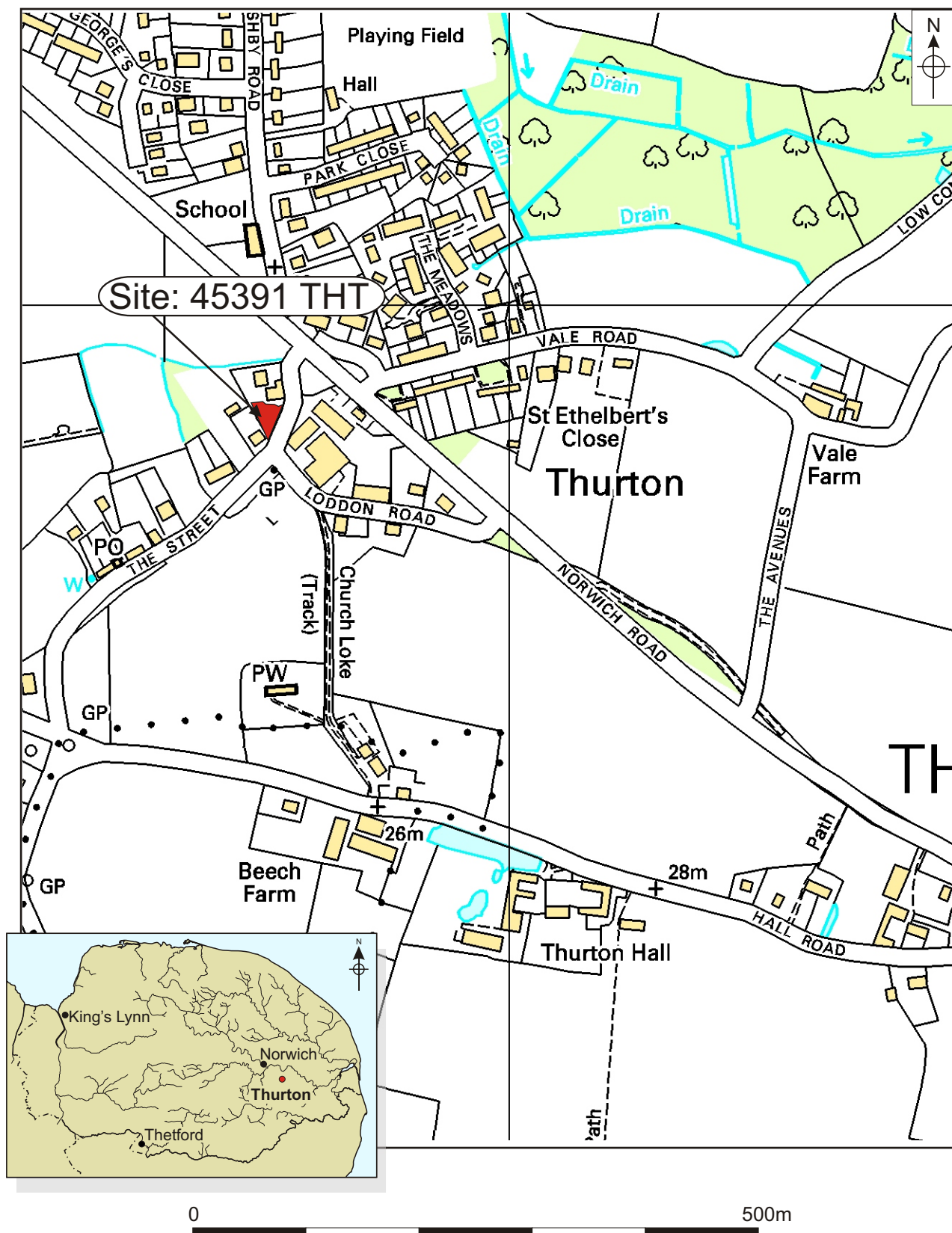


Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:5,000

Local Authority No.100019340

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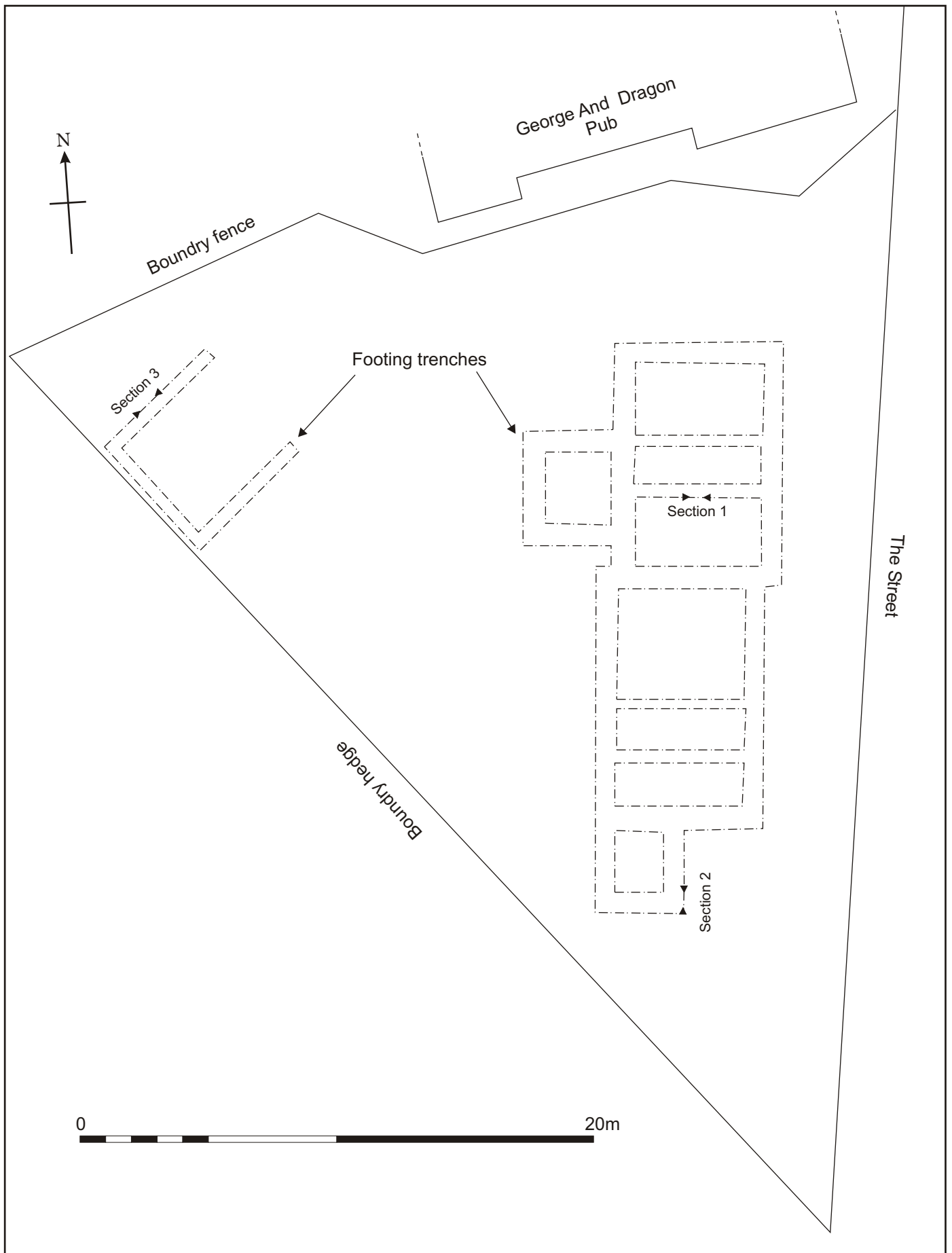
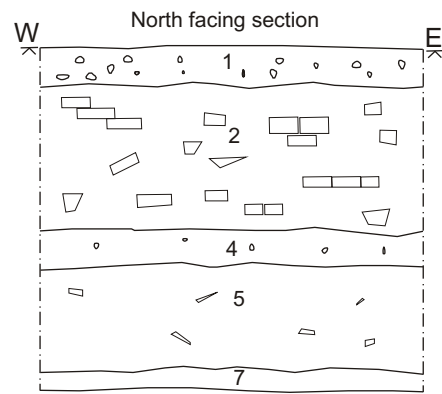
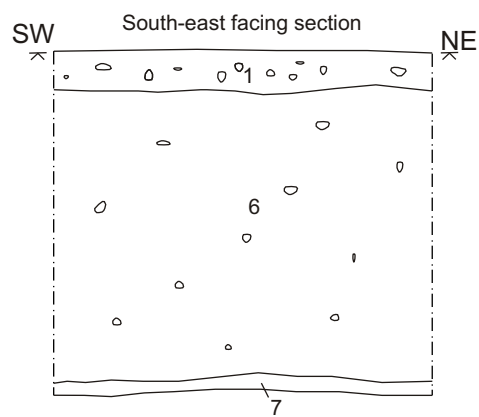


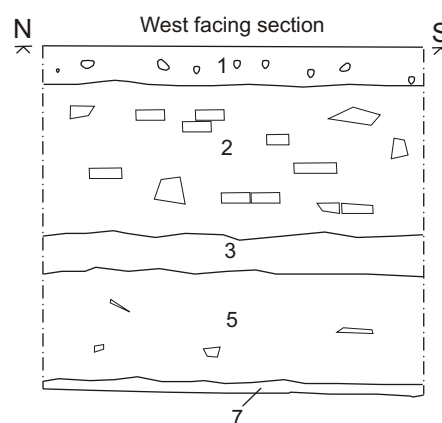
Figure 2. Plan of site, showing footing trenches. Scale 1:200



Section 1



Section 2



Section 3



Figure 3. Sections 1, 2 and 3. Scale 1:20