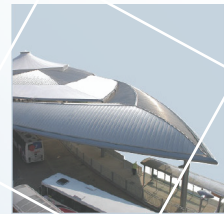


**Report № 1909**

## **An Archaeological Evaluation at 53 Earl's Street, Thetford**

NHER 51690 THD



Matt Ratcliff

October 2008

BAU1909

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<b>NAU ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT CHECKLIST</b>		
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Location:	53 Earl's Street, Thetford
District:	Breckland
Grid Ref.:	TL 8706 8327
HER No.:	51690 THD
Dates of Fieldwork:	19–20 August 2008

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## **Summary**

*An archaeological evaluation was carried out within the rear garden at 53 Earl's Street, Thetford. The two trenches revealed that this area had been previously quarried for chalk. The southern limit of the quarry was exposed and the build up of modern deposits within the chalk extraction area was recorded. There were no archaeological finds or features within the trenches.*

## **1.0 Introduction**

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by NAU Archaeology prior to the proposed development of residential housing within the grounds of 53 Earl's Street, Thetford. The site is a garden to the rear of the property, located at the north end of Earl's Street. The area of the site is approximately 1,454m<sup>2</sup> within a walled boundary.

The report was commissioned and funded by KKK Construction Ltd.

This programme of archaeological works was undertaken to fulfil a planning condition set by Breckland District Council and a Brief issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA ref.: KH 22/05/2008). The work was conducted in accordance with a Project Design and Method Statement prepared by NAU Archaeology (Ref: BAU1909/SAH).

The work was designed to mitigate damage to any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, following the guidelines set out in *Planning and Policy Guidance 16: Archaeology and Planning* (Department of the Environment 1990).

The site archive is currently held by NAU Archaeology and on completion of the project will be deposited with Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service, following the relevant policy on archiving standards.

## **2.0 Geology and Topography**

The site occupies the garden to the rear of 53 Earl's Street. The garden is rectangular and is oriented north-east–south-west. The ground slopes downwards quite sharply from the rear of the houses and rises again slightly towards the south-east and west of the property, giving the immediate impression of a 'bowl' shape.

The natural geology was a solid chalk bedrock, overlain by a 0.40m-thick layer of dark greyish-brown sandy silt topsoil. The topsoil appeared to be a consistent depth across the site (Funnell 2005).

Several small shrubs and trees were present along the boundary walls of the garden, as well as the roots and stumps of recently removed vegetation within the central area of the site.

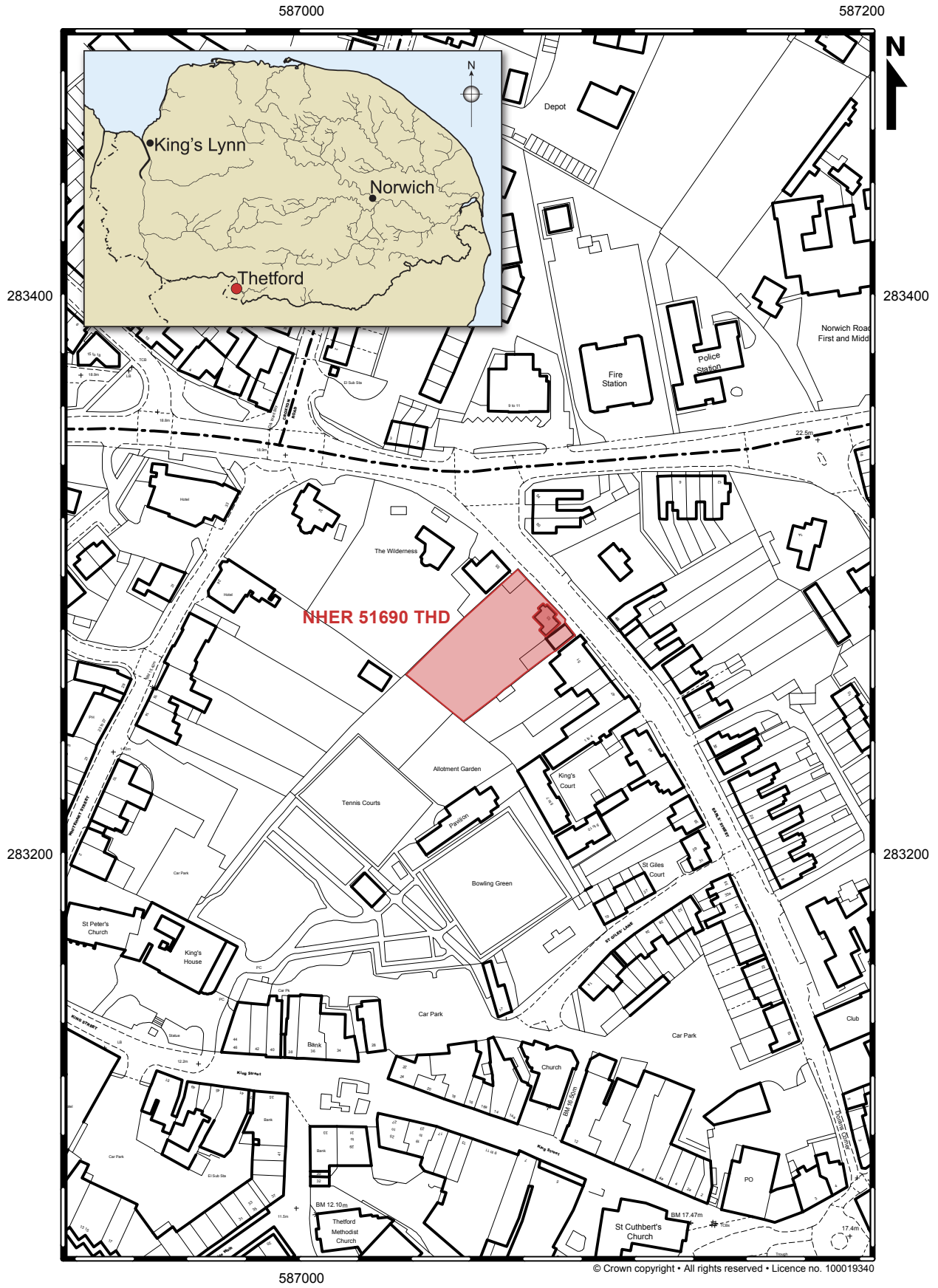


Figure 1 Site location

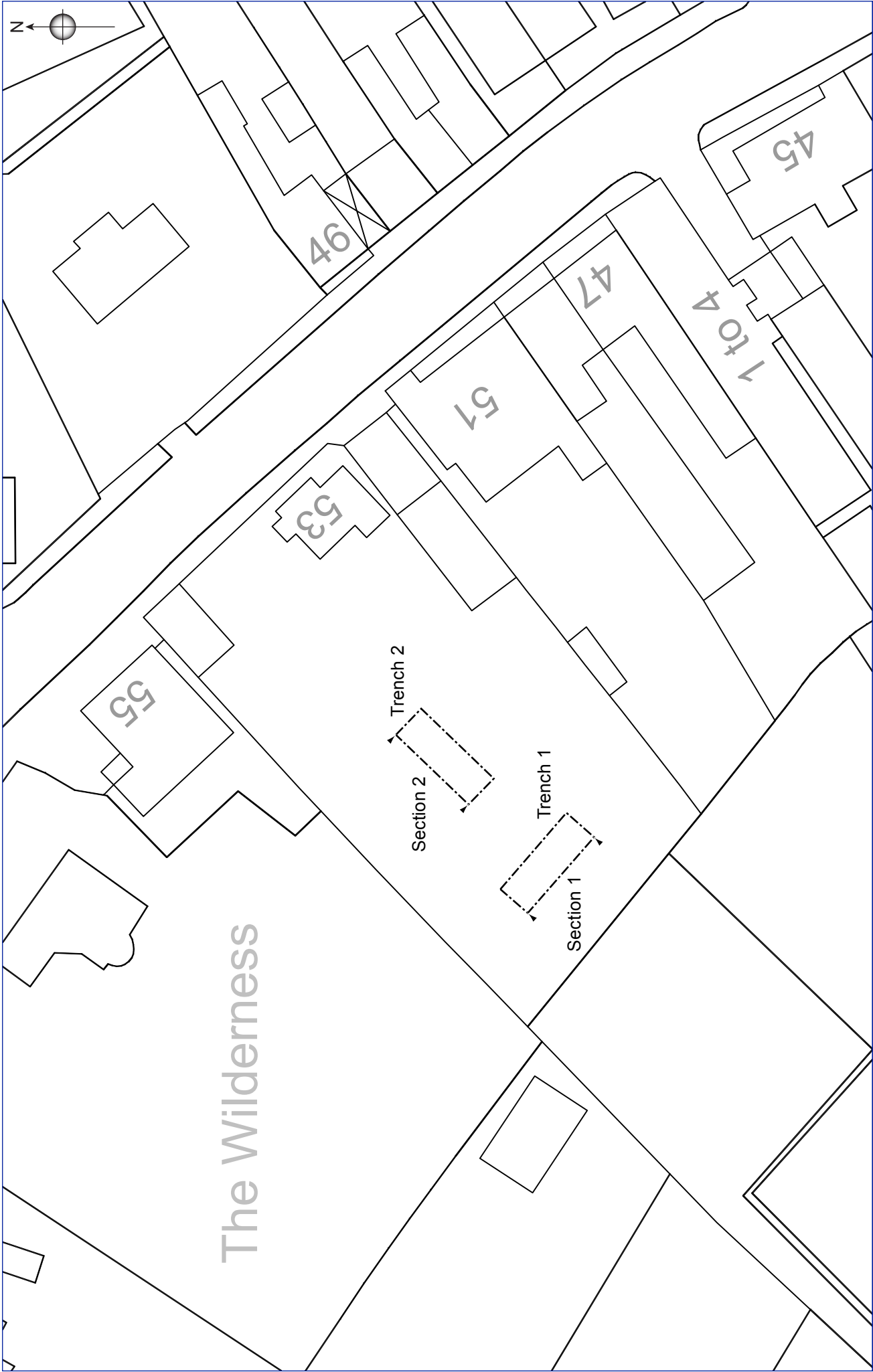


Figure 2 Trench location

### **3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background**

The proposed development is located within the northern defences of Thetford, dating from the 10th and 11th centuries (NHER 5886). Several findspots of Late Saxon and medieval pottery are recorded to the south of the present site (NHER 16627–9) and to its south-west (NHER 14192).

An evaluation carried out 80m south-west of the site in 2003 revealed a several Late Saxon pits of various sizes. Further features of probable medieval and post-medieval date were also recorded, including post-holes, and the footings of a 19th-century maltings (NHER 39595; Adams 2003).

The main archaeological monument in the vicinity of the site is the former church of St Andrew (NHER 5911), which lies 60m to the west of the site within the grounds of The Wilderness. The church was demolished in 1556 and its site had been made into a garden by 1717. The site of St Andrew's cross lies slightly further to the north at NHER 5922. The findspot of a medieval coin is recorded to the west of the site (NHER 41695).

Evaluations conducted 80m to the north of the current site in 2003–5 discovered that area had been extensively quarried, probably during the medieval period, but evidence survived for medieval property boundaries, ovens and graves (NHER 40819; Wallis 2004, 2005 and 2006).

### **4.0 Methodology**

The objective of this excavation 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.

The Brief required that a 5% sample of the development area be evaluated and two 10m x 3.60m trenches were excavated in order to provide this.

Machine excavation was carried out with a tracked mini-digger, using a toothless ditching bucket under constant archaeological supervision.

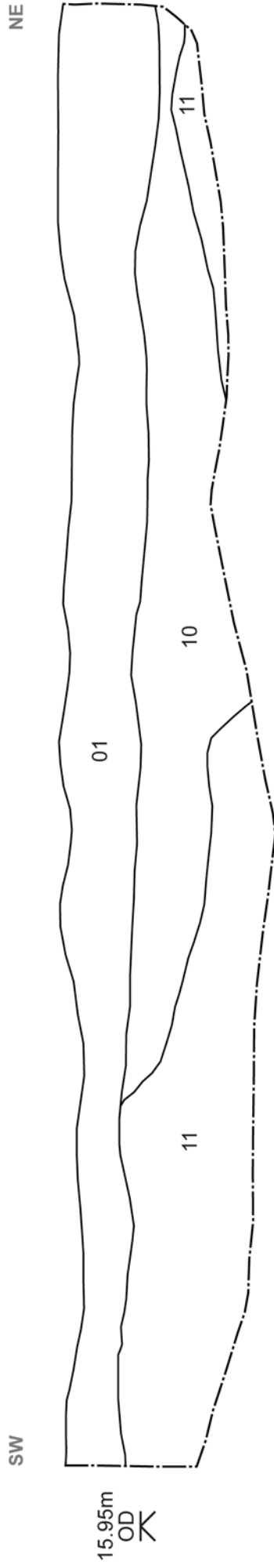
Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal-detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds, other than those which were obviously modern, were retained for inspection. No environmental samples were taken.

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

A level was transferred from an Ordnance Survey benchmark of 18.90m OD on the surface of the Norwich Road, at the north end of Earl's Street. A non-permanent peg was used as a temporary benchmark on site at a level of m OD.

Site conditions were reasonable. Due to the nature of the development already underway, and the presence of some semi-permanent obstructions, some areas of the site were not easily accessible. Two large piles of dead branches from the ground clearance could not be moved, which resulted in the relocation of one of the trenches. The weather was overcast with some stormy showers.





**Figure 3** Trench 2, Section 2, south-east facing

## 5.0 Results

Due to the location of immovable obstructions, and the character of the deposits within the ground depression, the original trench plan was changed. It was apparent from the topography before excavation that some sort of extraction or quarrying had been carried out previously on the site.

### 5.1 Trench 2

Trench 2 was excavated first, to a depth of 1.20m (Figs 2 and 5). The natural was not reached at this depth. Several deposits or layers were revealed and were identified as the modern accumulation and backfill within the quarried area. As the layers were characterised at this level, and no archaeology was present, the trench was not investigated further. The lowest deposit revealed was (11), a 0.80m-thick layer of mid-greyish-brown sandy silt, with frequent small chalk inclusions. Above this was a 0.68m-thick deposit of mixed chalk rubble (10). This appeared concave in section, possibly due to subsidence. The chalk was a mix of small-medium fragments and a light greyish-brown sandy silt. There were occasional small angular flint inclusions.

Above this was a 0.40m-thick layer of topsoil (01). This was a dark greyish-brown sandy silt, containing frequent roots. There were no archaeological features or finds within this trench.

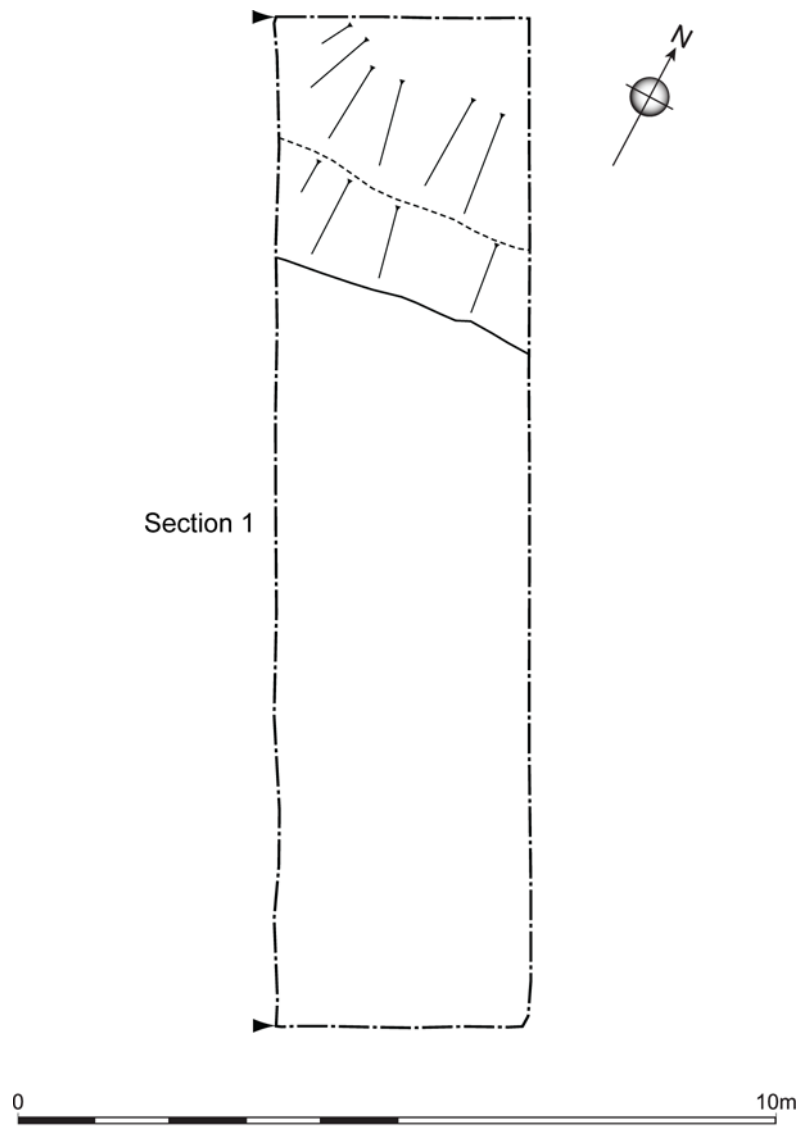
### 5.2 Trench 1

Due to the nature of the deposits in Trench 2, Trench 1 was relocated further to the south-east after consultation with Ken Hamilton (NLA). This was done in an attempt to locate and identify the edge of the quarried area. The south-east corner of the garden was the highest point at this end of the site and therefore the most likely place at which the natural chalk could be found.

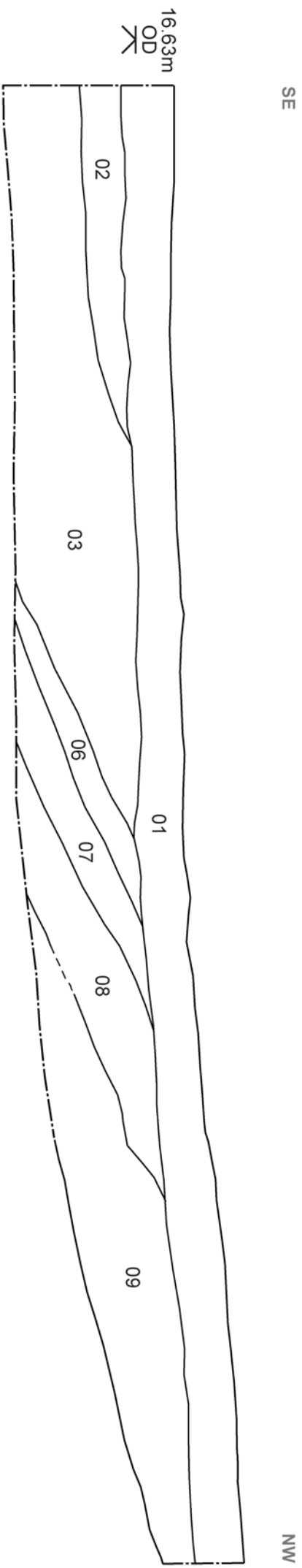
Trench 1 was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.20m (Figs 2–4). The south-eastern end revealed the chalk natural at 0.52m. The chalk sloped moderately downwards for 4m, before the maximum safe depth of the trench was reached. As the revealed chalk satisfactorily demonstrated the edge of the quarry, the trench was not investigated to a greater depth. Above the natural was a dark brown sandy silt layer (09). This was 0.60m thick, contained occasional small angular stones and sloped steeply down towards the north-west. Overlying this was a 0.40m-thick layer of redeposited chalk (08). This consisted of a yellowish-brown sandy silt with abundant small and medium pieces of chalk.

Above this was a mid-grey sandy silt layer (07). This was 0.25m thick and contained frequent small angular chalk fragments. Overlying this was a deposit of mixed brownish-yellow sandy silt, which contained frequent small chalk fragments (06). This was 0.18m thick and also sloped towards the north-west. Above this was a 0.25m-thick layer of greyish-brown sandy silt (03), containing frequent small chalk inclusions and occasional small flints. Some fragments of animal bone and red brick fragments were also present. Overlying this was a deposit of mixed light greyish brown sandy silt and abundant chalk fragments (02). This was 0.30m thick. Above this was topsoil (01). This was 0.30m thick at this point.

There were no archaeological features or finds within this trench.



**Figure 4** Plan of Trench 1



**Figure 5** Trench 1, Section 1, north-east facing

## **6.0 The Finds**

All of the finds identified on the site were modern and were recorded and discarded on site. These were discovered within the topsoil and within the deposits in Trench 2. Modern red brick and tile were found alongside slate, reinforced glass, rotten timber, glass bottles and a single piece of clay pipe. A fragment of modern glazed ceramic pipe was found within the lowest deposits (11) within Trench 2.

## **7.0 Conclusions**

The results of this evaluation demonstrate the results of chalk quarrying across the majority of the area investigated, as was revealed in the evaluation and excavation conducted to the north of the site in 2003–5 (Wallis 2004, 2005 and 2006). Trench 1 revealed the chalk natural and overlying deposits dropping sharply towards the central area of the site. Trench 2, located within the central (lowest) area, revealed a number of modern deposits. These appear to be an accumulation of backfilled or dumped material, likely built up slowly within the hollow left as a result of chalk quarrying.

As the higher, surrounding boundaries of the site have only a shallow topsoil above the chalk natural, and the lower central space is filled with a number of modern deposits, it seems unlikely that there is any surviving archaeology within the site's boundary.

Any previously existing archaeological features would appear to have been removed by the quarrying, which also had an impact on the surrounding subsoil, topsoil and any features or finds within it.

Recommendations for future work based upon this report will be made by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology.

## **Acknowledgements**

This work was funded by KKK Construction Ltd. The excavation was undertaken by the author and Michelle Kirk. Machine excavation was carried out by the client. The HER information was supplied by Alice Cattermole of Norfolk Landscape Archaeology. The plans and sections were digitised by Michael Feather and the report was edited by Richard Hoggett.

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## Appendix 1a: Context Summary

Context	Category	Description	Period
1	Topsoil	Topsoil	Modern
2	Deposit	Redeposited Chalk	Modern
3	Deposit	Sandy Silt	Modern
4	Deposit	Sandy Silt	Modern
5	Deposit	Sandy Silt	Modern
6	Deposit	Sandy Silt	Modern
7	Deposit	Sandy Silt	Modern
8	Deposit	Redeposited Chalk	Modern
9	Deposit	Sandy Silt	Modern
10	Deposit	Redeposited Chalk	Modern
11	Deposit	Sandy Silt	Modern