

# **NAU Archaeology**

Report No. 1275

## **An Archaeological Window Sampling Evaluation at 63 High Street, Lowestoft, Suffolk**

LWT 158

Project overseen by:	Andy Hutcheson
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John W. Percival  
August 2007

BAU 1481  
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<b>Project checklist</b>		<b>Date</b>
Draft complete	John Percival	26/06/07
Graphics complete	David Dobson	14/08/07
Edit complete	Sarah Harrison	30/08/07
Signed off	Andy Hutcheson	20/09/07

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### ***Acknowledgements***

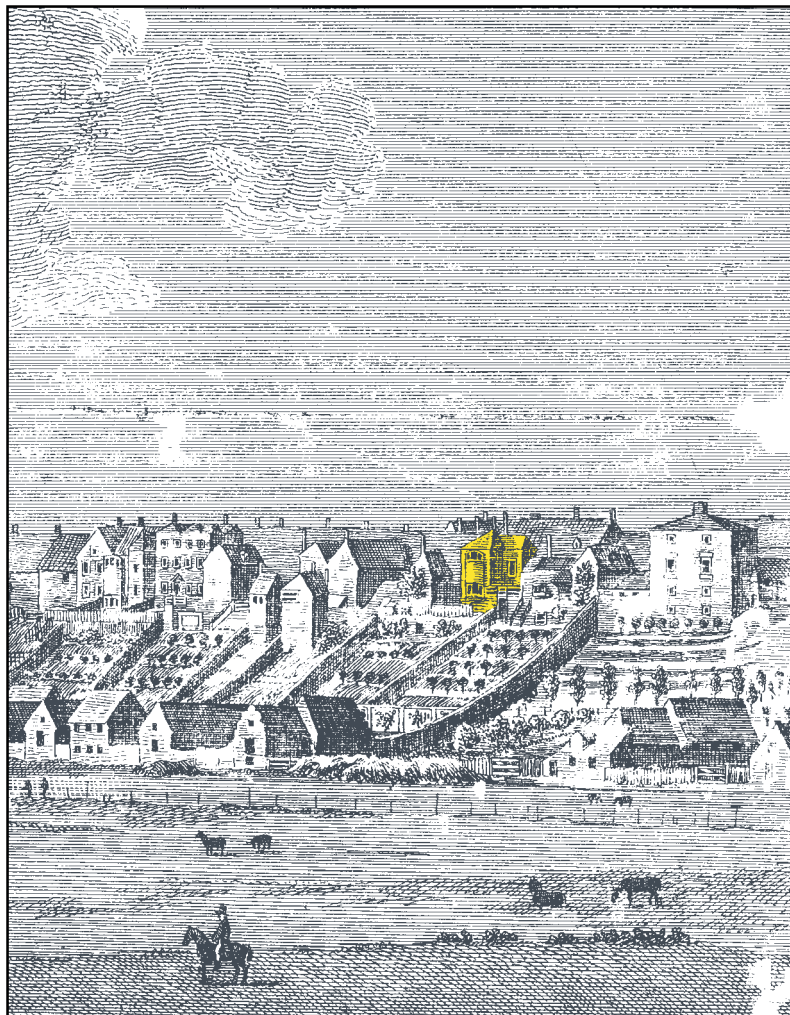
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Extract from T Cook's 1790 'Perspective view of Lowestoft from the NE Battery'. Rear of 63 High Street highlighted

Location: Rear of 63 High Street, Lowestoft  
District: Waveney  
Grid Ref: TM 5516 9371  
SMR No.: LWT 158  
Date of fieldwork: 12th April 2007

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## **Summary**

*NAU Archaeology carried out an archaeological window sample excavation to the rear of 63 High Street, Lowestoft, a substantial Georgian townhouse within the historic core of the town. The scope of the investigations was limited by the topography and other factors. On the uppermost terrace adjacent to the house window sampling revealed that dense 'natural' boulder clay deposits lay below topsoil and associated deposits at a depth of 0.7m to 0.9m, with glacial sands underlying the boulder clay at a depth of a little under 4.0m. Test pits on the lower terrace were recorded. Glacial sands were seen below topsoil and similar layers at an average depth of 1.0m. No obvious evidence of buried archaeological features was seen. A few sherds of pottery dated to the post-medieval period were found in topsoil recovered by window sampling.*

## **1.0 Introduction**

The area that forms the subject of this report lies to the rear of 63 High Street Lowestoft (Figs 1 and 2). The roughly rectangular plot measured approximately 40m from east to west and 15m from north to south, and had a total area of c.500 m<sup>2</sup>. The area of new build occupies the centre of the plot and has an area of c.150 m<sup>2</sup>.

This report was commissioned and funded by Mr J. Head of Beccles.

This archaeological programme was undertaken to fulfil a planning condition set by Waveney District Council on advice from Keith Wade of Suffolk County Council and in accordance with a Project Design and Method Statement prepared by NAU Archaeology (Ref: BAU1481/AH)

The 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 and Policy Guidance 16 – Archaeology and Planning* (Department of the Environment 1990). The results will enable decisions to be made by the Local Planning Authority with regard to the treatment of any archaeological remains found.

The site archive is currently held by NAU Archaeology and on completion of the project will be deposited through the Suffolk Sites and Monuments Record, following the relevant policy on archiving standards.

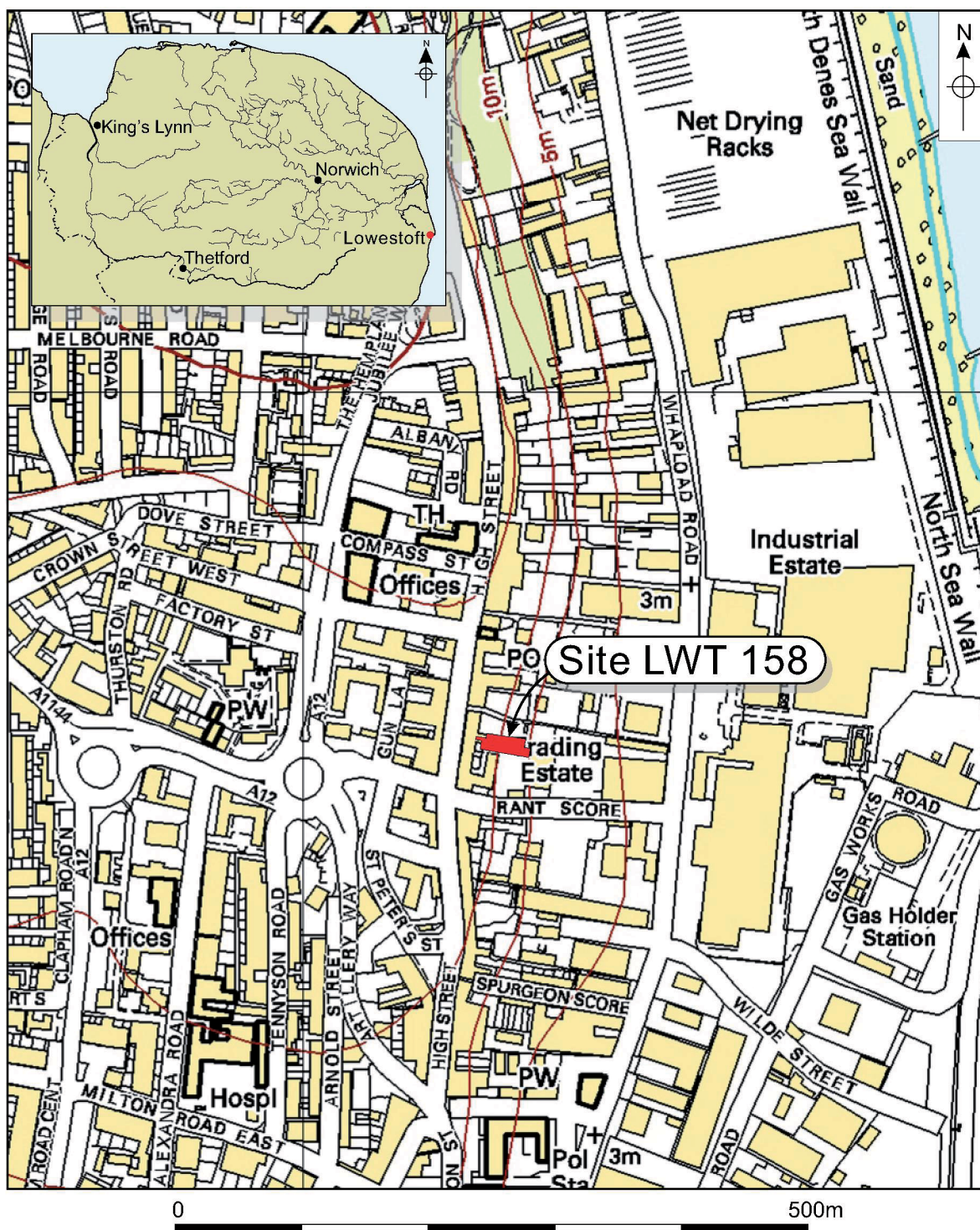


Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:5000

Local Authority No.100019340

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## **2.0 Geology and Topography**

The topography of the site and its environs are, in East Anglian terms, dramatic. High Street, Lowestoft, lies on the crest of a ridge that falls away sharply to the east (Plate 2). The street frontage west of No. 63 lies at an elevation of around 17m OD. Whaplode Road, c.170m east of the High Street and roughly parallel to it, lies at an elevation of a little over 4m OD. South and west of the High Street the ground falls away more gently toward Lake Lothing. To the north-west the central northern part of the modern town lies at approximately 30m OD.

The plot itself is formed of two elements: a roughly level terrace extending c.15m from the rear of the building at an elevation of c.16.5m OD. Beyond this the ground drops away sharply and levels off into a sloping terrace before falling eastwards to an elevation of approximately 12.5m OD.

The geology of the Lowestoft is characterised by the presence of glacially deposited boulder clay and sandy till deposits (Wymer 1999).

## **3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background**

Though a regional market town of some standing (a market and fair being granted in 1308) Lowestoft was a relatively minor trading and fishing port in the medieval and early post-medieval periods, when goods were embarked and disembarked from ships drawn up on the beach. It was not until the 1830s that the eastern end of Lake Lothing was connected by artificial channel to the sea (Butcher 1995, 17; Malster 1999). Initial attempts to develop Lowestoft as a modern industrial port were part of a larger plan to allow navigation for large (in early-19th-century terms) sea-going vessels as far inland as Norwich (Malster 1999), Lowestoft's future as a port was consolidated by railway magnate Samuel Morton Peto, who connected it to the railway system and added the outer harbour. Subsequently, fishing became the predominant activity at the port (Malster 1999).

A unique topographic feature of the historic core of Lowestoft are the Scores, the steeply sloping streets linking the High Street to the beach (Whaplode Road). The origins of the name 'Score' are unclear but the purpose of these roads is comparable to the somewhat similar Rows of Great Yarmouth – the provision of an easy route along which goods unloaded on the beach might be rapidly moved to the commercial areas of the town. Unlike the Yarmouth Rows, there is little evidence for buildings or other activity along the frontage of the Scores themselves. Of the twelve known Scores, ten are still in use.

During the medieval and early post-medieval periods the areas immediately behind buildings fronting onto the High Street were often used for domestic outbuildings (David Butcher pers. comm.). The areas below as well as being gardens were often used for rubbish disposal, as evidenced by the excavations at John Wilde School, to the rear of 70–80 High Street (see Table 1 below).

It has been postulated that by the early 17th century Lowestoft had not expanded significantly beyond its medieval core, which was centred on the High Street and marketplace (Butcher 1995, 25).



Figure 2. Detailed site location plan. Scale 1:500

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Table 1 (below) lists previously known pre-19th-century archaeological sites and finds within the vicinity of 63 High Street.

Location	SMR Number	Details	Date
Adjacent Albany Road	LWT 002-1655	Fragment of partly polished axe 'found in area of housing' in late 1950s	Neolithic
41–42 and 160 High Street	LW T013-1669	Vaulted crypts or undercrofts below 41–42 and 160 High Street. Possibly the remains of St Bartholomew's Priory	Medieval
High Street	LWT Misc-16773	Possible clay tobacco pipe production evidenced by 1851 census	Post-medieval
Adjacent Factory Street	LWT 038-18195	Site of Lowestoft porcelain factory	Post-medieval
Adjacent Old Nelson Street	LWT 039-18253	Site of ?Napoleonic gun battery	Post-medieval
Day Care centre, Crown Score	LWT 140-21139	Small fragment of flint wall of probable post-medieval date seen during monitoring of groundworks	?Post-medieval
John Wilde School, Wilde Score	LWT 145-21715, 21719	Medieval and post-medieval finds recovered during excavation	Medieval and post-medieval

Table 1 Sites and Monuments Records of pre-19th-century sites and finds

During the 16th and 17th centuries 63 High Street was associated with the Hodds and Arnold families, both of which were part of the town's merchant elite (David Butcher pers. comm.). Although the present building at 63 High Street doubtless has a complex history in terms of additions, alterations or rebuilds, as indicated by multiple floor levels on the ground floor, none of the fabric appears to pre-date the Georgian era, and there are no obvious indications that the 18th-century building is masking or encasing any elements of an earlier building. From the rear 63 High Street appears little changed from when it was illustrated on T. Cook's 1790 perspective of Lowestoft (compare Frontispiece, Plate 1).

#### 4.0 Methodology

The objective of this evaluation 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.

It was initially anticipated that a line of window samples would be sunk from west to east across the site. This was not possible because the window sampling rig could not gain access to the lower eastern part of the site. The primary impediment to access for the window sampling rig was a deep wide trench running north–south across the centre of the site, which had been cut through dark brown boulder clay which contained sparse gravel and flecks of chalk. The base of this trench was concreted and was approximately 1.8m wide, and most of the up-cast had been dumped to form a rough bank on its eastern side. The small gap between the northern end of the trench and the northern boundary wall was partly blocked by steel railings and consisted of a rough uneven slope. Even if the

window sample rig had been able to access the lower terrace the steeply sloping south-east part of the site was covered with rubble and debris and overgrown with a tangle of brambles and undergrowth.

Three window samples were taken on the grassed area in the south-west part of the site using a Dando Terrier diesel-powered rig. The samples were taken in a series of 1m-long casings with an external diameter of 143mm and a retrieved sample diameter of 125mm. The maximum sample depth obtained was 4m.

In addition to the widow samples three test pits dug for civil engineering purposes were partially cleaned and recorded. These test pits measured not more than 0.5m by 0.5m and had been excavated by the building contractor to a depth of a little over 1.2m. The base of the test pits had been hand-augered and the results recorded in the structural engineer's report, which has been incorporated into this report.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using NAU Archaeology *pro forma* sheets. 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 spot-height of 18.60m on the junction of Rant Score and High Street. A temporary benchmark (16.50m OD) was measured on a steel spike on the western external side of the doorway in the southern side of the site.

Aside from problems with access caused by the topography and condition of the site no other significant problems were encountered. Weather conditions were near-perfect.



Plate 1. Looking west at the rear of 63 High Street  
(photograph by John Percival)



Plate 2. Looking east down the slope from the eastern end of the site  
(photograph by John Percival)

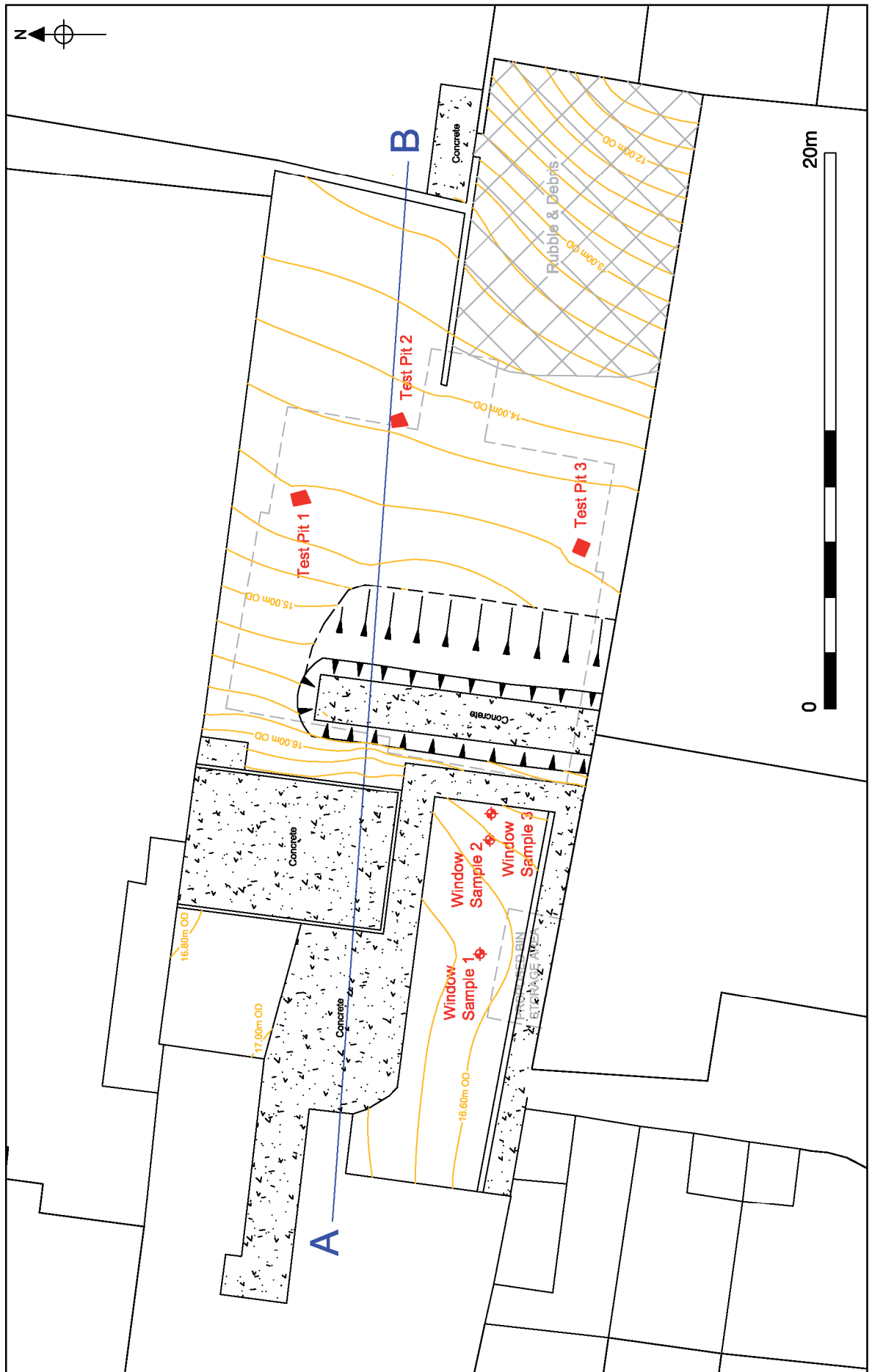


Figure 3. Detailed site plan, contour interval 0.2m. Scale 1:200

## **5.0 Results**

### **5.1 The window samples (Figs 3, 4 and 6)**

As mentioned above, the window samples were taken on the uppermost terrace of the site adjacent to the rear of No. 63. Window Sample 1 revealed the presence of a concrete surface or floor overlain by c.0.3m of recently redeposited topsoil and underlain by brick rubble. Undisturbed boulder clay began at a depth of 0.9m.

The upper deposit in Window Sample 2 consisted of c.0.8m of topsoil. Below this boulder clay was seen. The upper 0.8m of the boulder clay contained inclusions of sand and brick towards its upper horizon. This indicates that the top of the boulder clay had been disturbed by tree root action or similar turbation.

The results from Window Sample 3 were similar to those from Sample 2. Topsoil with a depth of 0.75m overlay a thin layer of fine sand less than 0.1m thick. Below this a layer of sandy clay loam and crushed mortar 0.15m thick was recorded. These deposits were probably material relating to a phase of renovation of the extant 63 High Street building. Below the crushed mortar a layer of disturbed or redeposited boulder clay was seen. This layer contained some charcoal and large fragments of brick of probable Georgian or Victorian date. Undisturbed boulder clay was seen at a depth of 0.95m.

### **5.2 The Test Pits (Figs 3, 5 and 6)**

Test Pit 1 (Engineer's Test Pit 2) was c.0.6m wide and had been excavated to a depth of 1.2m. The upper 0.6m of this test pit was made up of sandy loam topsoil which contained occasional fragments of flint, tile and brick. Below this a similar sandy loam deposit 0.3m thick with a marked clay content was recorded. Below this a uniform mid-yellow to brownish sand was seen. This layer was c.0.3m thick and had a clay and gravel content; it was essentially a turbated version of the undisturbed glacial sands below, which were seen at a depth of 1.2m. The undisturbed sands had been hand-augered, demonstrating they had a slight gravel content, but were otherwise uniform to a depth of 1.9m.

The upper 0.4m of Test Pit 2 (Engineer's Test Pit 3) was made up of friable sandy topsoil which contained small fragments of brick, tile and coal. Below this and to a depth of c.1.3m a similar sandy loam deposit with a slight clay content was seen. Hand-auguring demonstrated that undisturbed glacial sand began at a depth of 1.5 and extended to 2.00m below the ground surface.

Test Pit 3 (Engineer's Test Pit 5) had been excavated to a depth of a little over 1.0m. The upper 0.7m was made up of sandy loam topsoil containing frequent small fragments of coal with lesser quantities of mortar, brick and tile. Below this a similar sandy loam deposit with a small clay component was seen. A hand auger sounding indicated that natural sand began at a depth of 1.1m and extended to a depth of 1.9m.

No pottery or other artefacts were recovered from the test pits or their associated spoil.

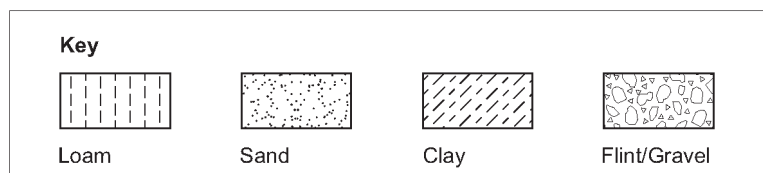
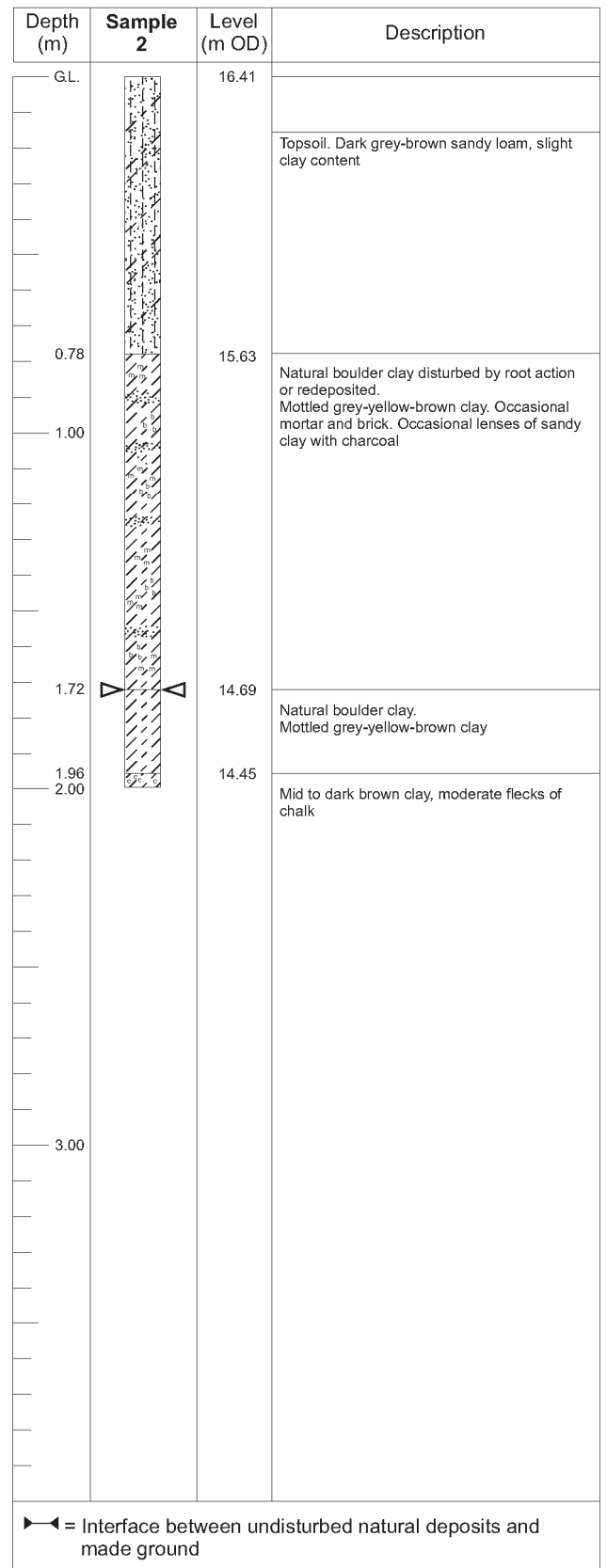
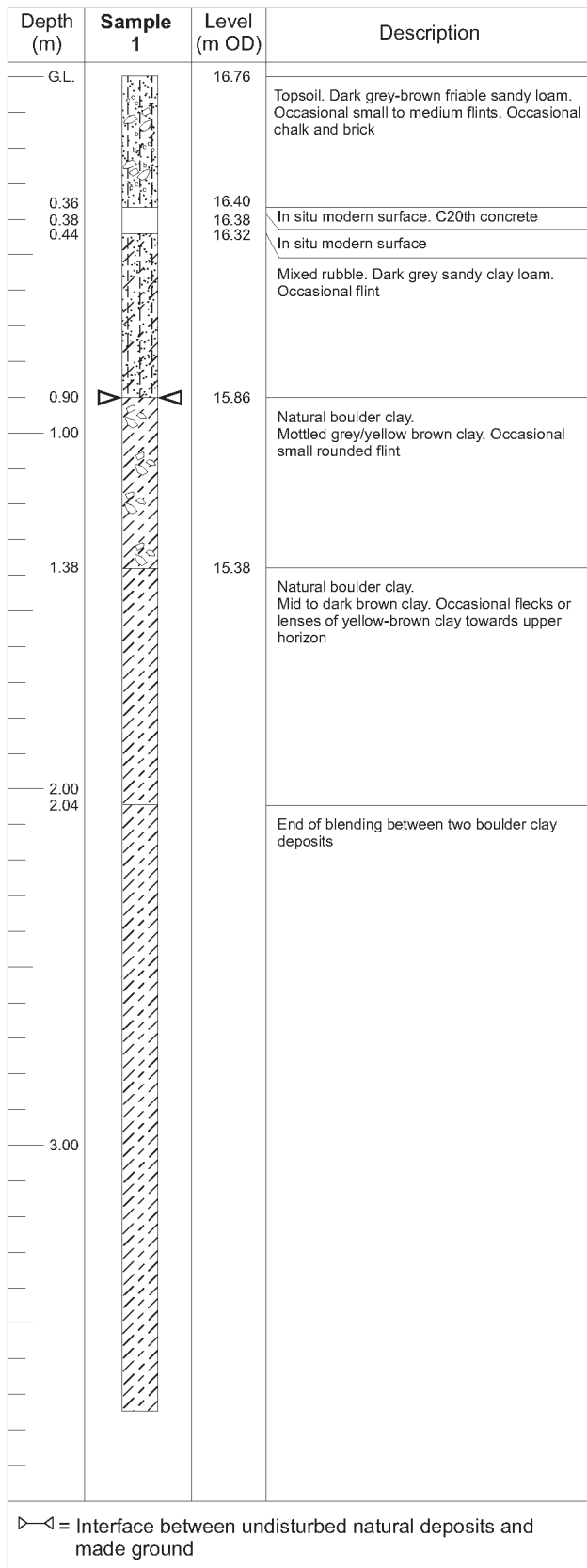


Figure 4. The window samples. Sample 1 and 2. Scale 1:20

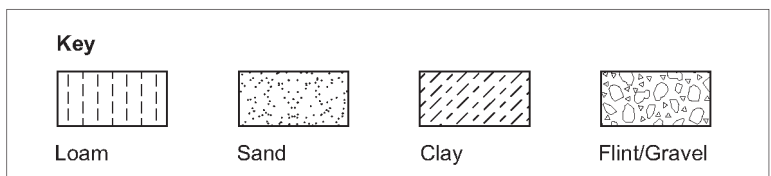
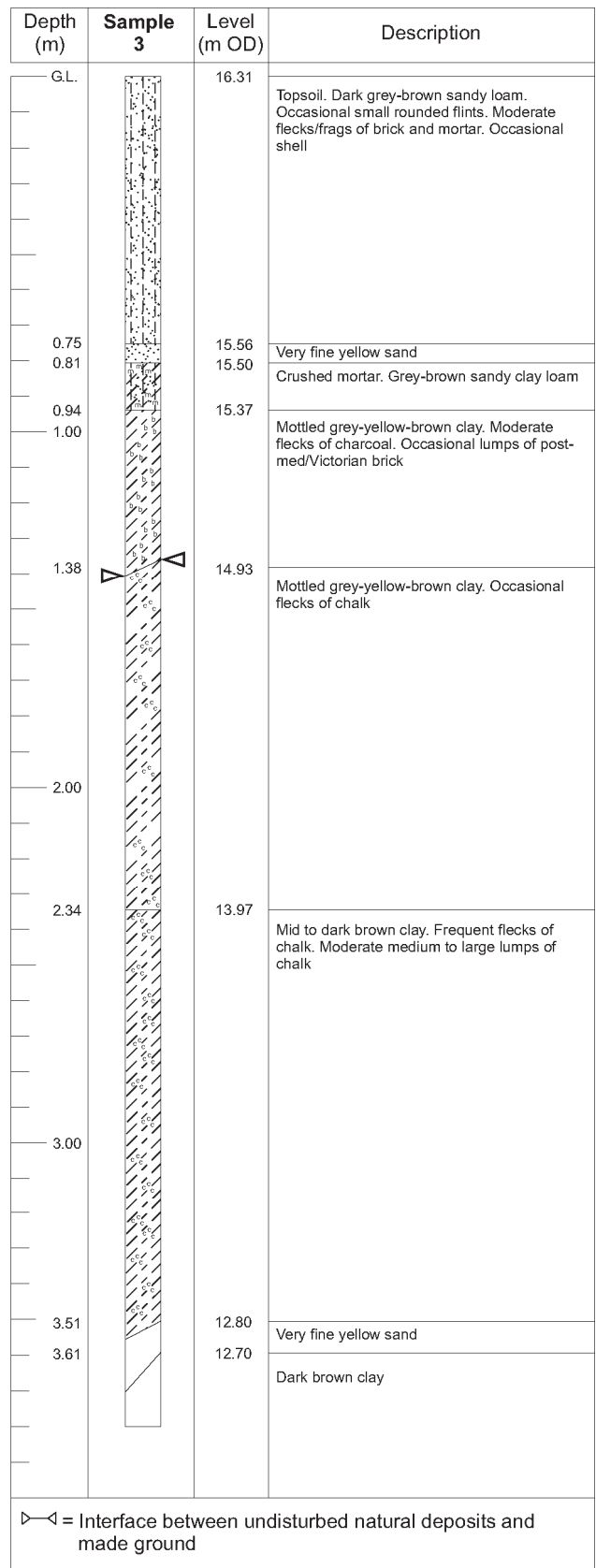


Figure 4. The window samples. Sample 3. Scale 1:20

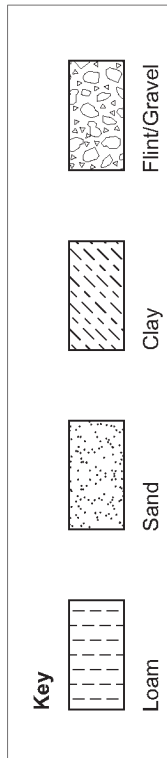
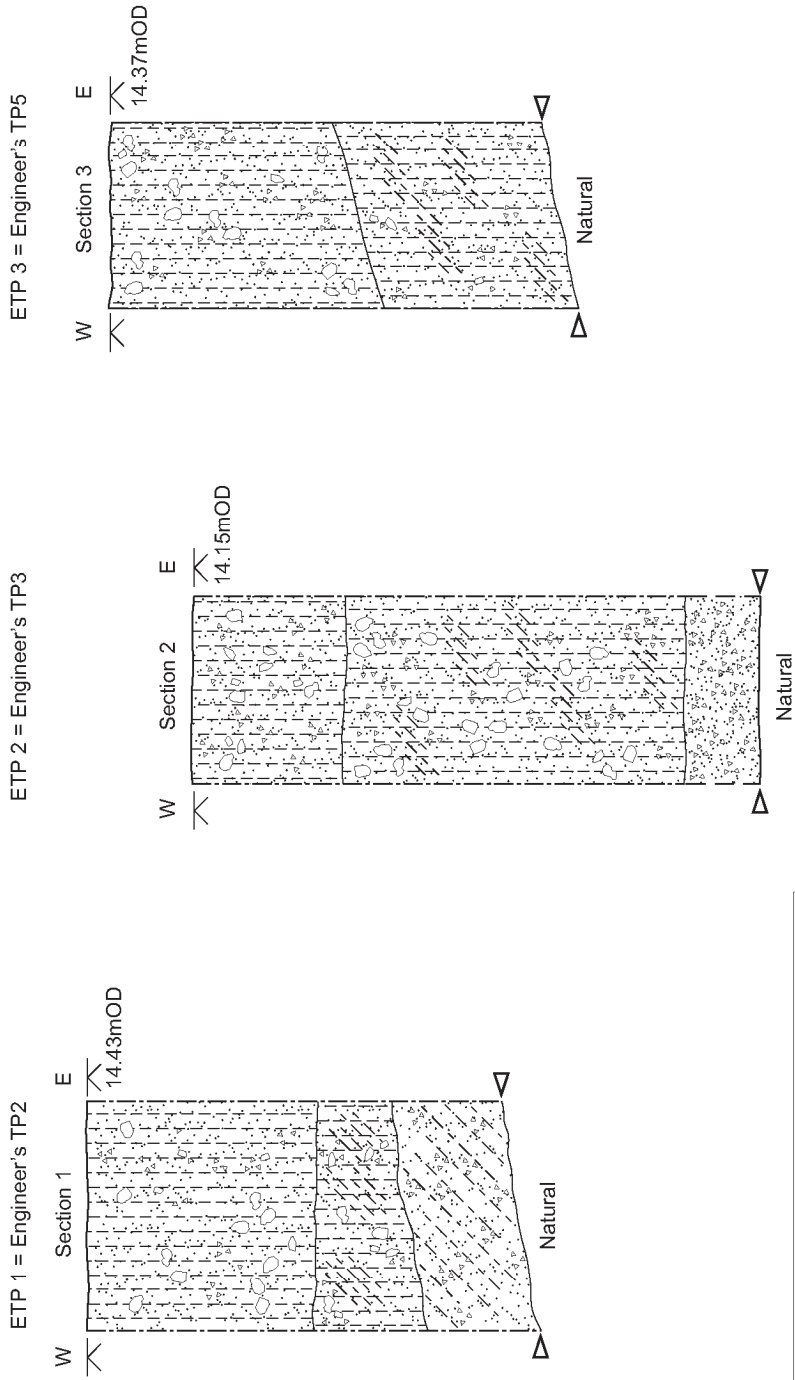


Figure 5. The test pits. Scale 1:20

## **6.0 The Finds**

### **6.1 Pottery**

by Sue Anderson

Four sherds of pottery were collected from sieved elements of the window samples. One late medieval and transitional base sherd (3g; 15th–16th-century) with internal pale lead green glaze was collected from the topsoil of Window Sample 2. Three sherds from the topsoil of Window Sample 3 were fragments of a single creamware vessel in the pale cream colour of the later form of this ware (19th-century).

## **7.0 Conclusions**

No evidence of medieval activity was found within the site and no medieval finds were recovered. There was little or no evidence of any cut features or significant rubbish disposal during either the medieval or the post-medieval periods. There was evidence that the ‘upper terrace’ has been disturbed by the concrete foundations of a number of 20th-century structures, and approximately 20% of the area within the footprint of the proposed new build has already been disturbed by the excavation of the concreted trench.

From the evidence of the window samples and test pits the archaeological potential of the site is low. The window samples did, however, provide evidence of a geological curiosity. The boulder clay seen in the window samples demonstrably overlies the sandier deposits seen in the test pits. The abrupt change between the two occurs within a distance of less than six metres. Speculation as to the exact nature of the boundary between these two geological deposits, and their erosional histories, is beyond the scope of this report.

### ***Acknowledgements***

The fieldwork was carried out by the author. The project was commissioned and funded by Mr J. Head of Beccles, and was designed and overseen by Andy Hutcheson. This report was edited by Sarah Harrison and produced by David Dobson. Illustrations are by David Dobson and the author. The window sampling was carried out by the Norfolk Partnership Laboratory. Thanks are also due to Graham Oldman of Graham Oldman Builders, Lowestoft.



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