Report 2514

nau archaeology

An Archaeological Evaluation of Land off Cresswell Street, King's Lynn, Norfolk

ENF125180

Prepared for
Mr. K. Balding
2 Round Covert Bungalow
Cranwich Road
Mundford
Thetford
Norfolk

Peter. J. Watkins BA AIfA

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PROJECT CHECKLIST		
Project Manager	David Whitmore	
Draft Completed	Peter Watkins	24/08/2010
Graphics Completed	David Dobson	01/09/2010
Edit Completed	Jayne Bown	06/09/2010
Signed Off	David Whitmore	06/09/2010
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NAU Archaeology
Scandic House
85 Mountergate
Norwich
NR1 1PY

T 01603 756150 F 01603 756190 E jayne.bown@nps.co.uk www.nau.org.uk

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Location:	Allotment gardens off Cresswell Street, King's Lynn, Norfolk
District:	King's Lynn and West Norfolk
Grid Ref.:	TF 6217 2096
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Summary

An archaeological evaluation was conducted for Kelvin Balding prior to the construction of two residential dwellings on former allotment gardens at the end of Cresswell Street, King's Lynn.

The site was once an area of salt marsh beyond the northern limits of King's Lynn, being enclosed by an extension to the town's defences in the 17th century. Although the site lies close the line of these Civil War defences (and the probable location of an 18th-century brick kiln) the single trench excavated revealed no archaeologically significant features or deposits. This result, coupled with those of earlier work, suggests that this area remained largely undeveloped until the creation of Cresswell Street and its adjacent roads in the late 19th century.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In August 2010 NAU Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation of land off Cresswell Street, King's Lynn, Norfolk (Fig. 1). This work resulted from proposals to construct two residential dwellings and was commissioned by and funded by Kelvin Balding.

The proposed development area comprises a small block of land (*c*. 480m^2) that was formerly an allotment garden. The site is bounded by extant allotment gardens to the west and east and opens out onto an access road to the north. Its southern boundary is formed by a reasonably substantial drainage ditch.

This evaluation was undertaken to fulfil a planning condition set by the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk (Ref. 09/00135/O) and a Brief issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (Ref. CNF41564). The work was conducted in accordance with a Project Design and Method Statement prepared by NAU Archaeology (Ref. NAU/BAU2514/DW). This evaluation

This evaluation 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 a*nd *Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology a*nd *Planning* (Department of the Environment 1990). 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 NAU Archaeology and on completion of the project will be deposited with the Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service (NMAS), following the relevant policies on archiving standards.

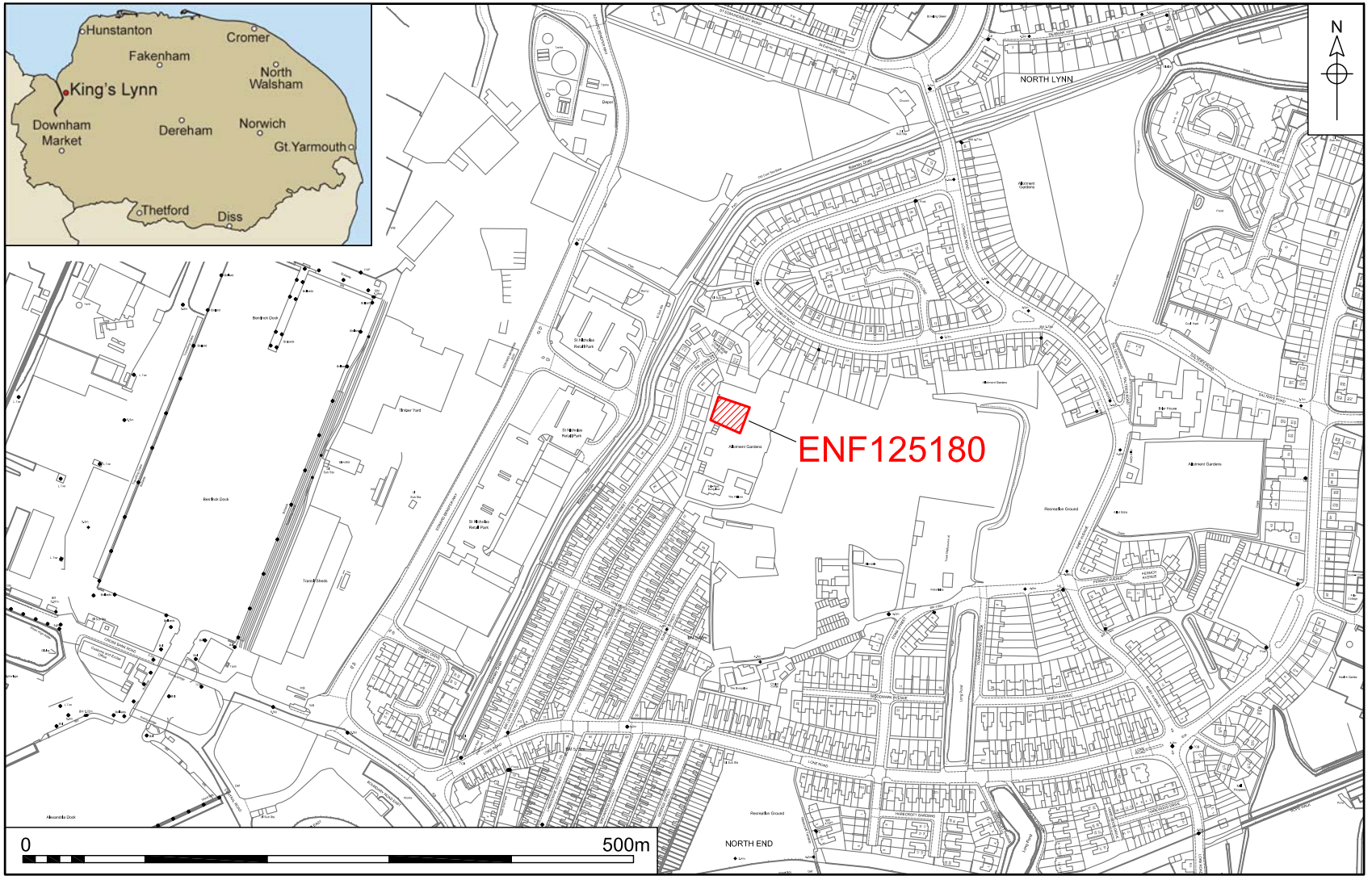

Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:5000

2.0 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

The medieval town of Lynn was laid out on the eastern side of the estuary lake through which the Little Ouse and the Nar flowed out into the Wash. This land would formerly have been marshland, dissected by numerous channels and creeks (Ashwin 2000). Since its founding the areas of salt marsh that surrounded the town have been steadily reclaimed.

The underlying geology consists of Ampthill and Kimmeridge Clays (BGS 1985), although a considerable depth of alluvial clay and silt lies between these Upper Jurassic deposits and the overlying soils. Previous work in the Fenland region has shown this alluvium to be a complex interleaved sequence of marine and freshwater deposits. The first deposit in this Flandrian sequence is the 'lower peat' which is sealed by a thick marine deposit known as the Fen Clay, which formed as a result of marine transgressions up to the end of the third millennium BC (Silvester 1988). Over much of the Fens there was succeeding peat growth, known as the Nordelph Peat (BGS 1991). This upper peat is sealed by the Terrington Beds, a series of later marine silts. Although undivided by the British Geological Survey these silts are now believed to be have resulted from at least two phases of marine transgression, the earliest occurring between 1300 and 300 BC (the Iron Age silt). The uppermost silts are thought to have formed as a result of short-lived flooding events in the post-Roman period (Silvester 1988).

The site has a maximum elevation of approximately 3.10m O.D and slopes slightly from north to south. This particular allotment was previously heavily overgrown, with all vegetation and a row of mature trees along its northern edge being cleared just before this work took place.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Early activity in the vicinity of King's Lynn is largely represented by chance finds, which is unsurprising given the considerable depth of alluvial material that now seals evidence relating to these periods. Prehistoric artefacts found in the vicinity of the site include a Neolithic (4000–2300BC) barbed flint arrowhead found at Bentinck Dock (Norfolk Historical Environment Record (NHER) 5495) and a Beaker period (2300–1700 BC) barbed and tanged arrowhead found on an allotment near Salter's Road (NHER 5494). Although an Iron Age pottery jug was recovered from a garden on Loke Road (NHER 29543) this is of Cypriot origin and probably a fairly recent import! Roman finds are limited to a single coin found in a garden on Fermoy Avenue (NHER 14628).

The first town lay on land allocated by the Bishop of Norwich, between the Millfleet and the Purfleet; two of the watercourses that dominated the medieval town, acting as highways, sewers and sources of power for mills (Parker 1971). The town expanded onto the northern side of the Purfleet in the later half of the 12th century. This extension, under the Lordship of the bishop, was treated like a new settlement, having its own market, fair and chapel. The two areas were merged in 1204 when a charter was obtained for the town. South Lynn, which lay to the south of the Millfleet, was separately administered until as late as 1555 (Parker 1971).

The proposed development site appears to have lain outside of the medieval town, the northern limits of which were marked by the line of the River Gay (the Fisher

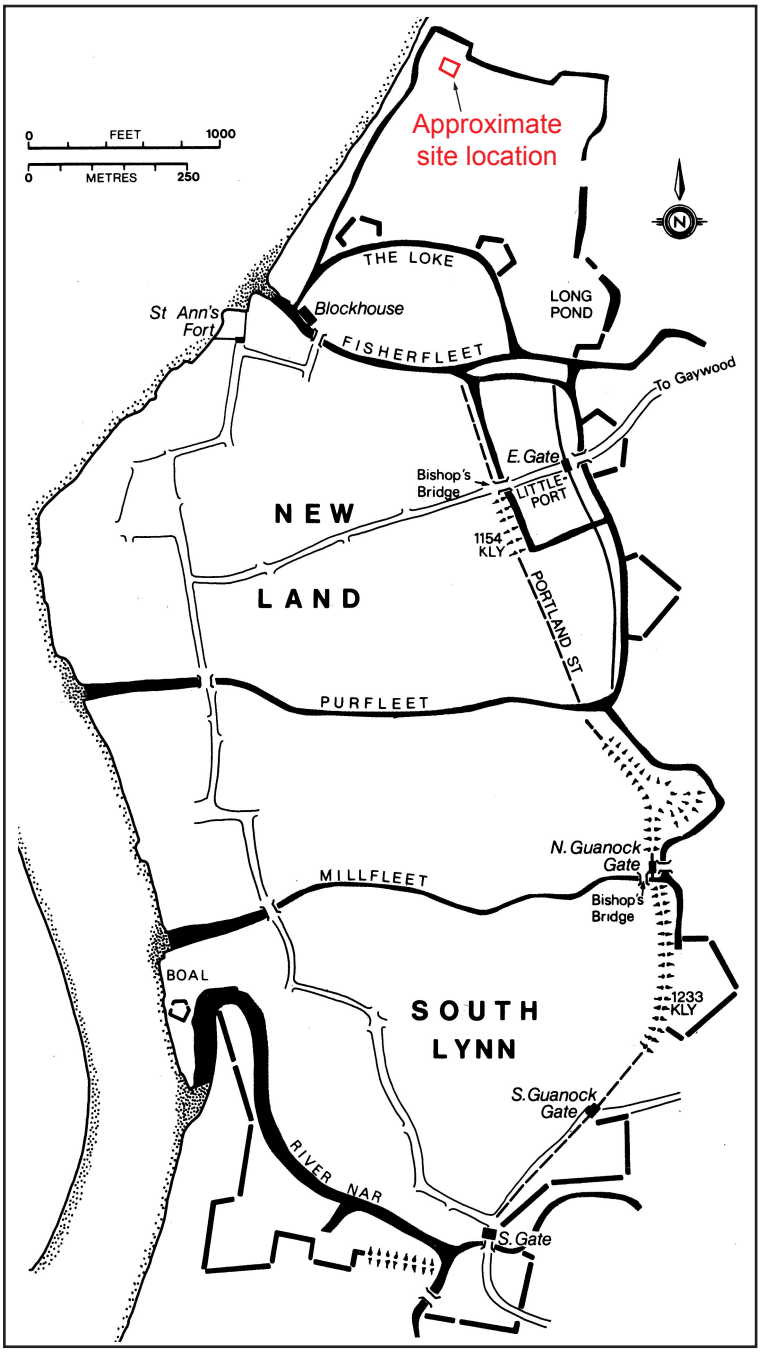

Figure 2. Plan of medieval and post-medieval defences of King's Lynn
(from Clarke and Carter 1977, fig.195)

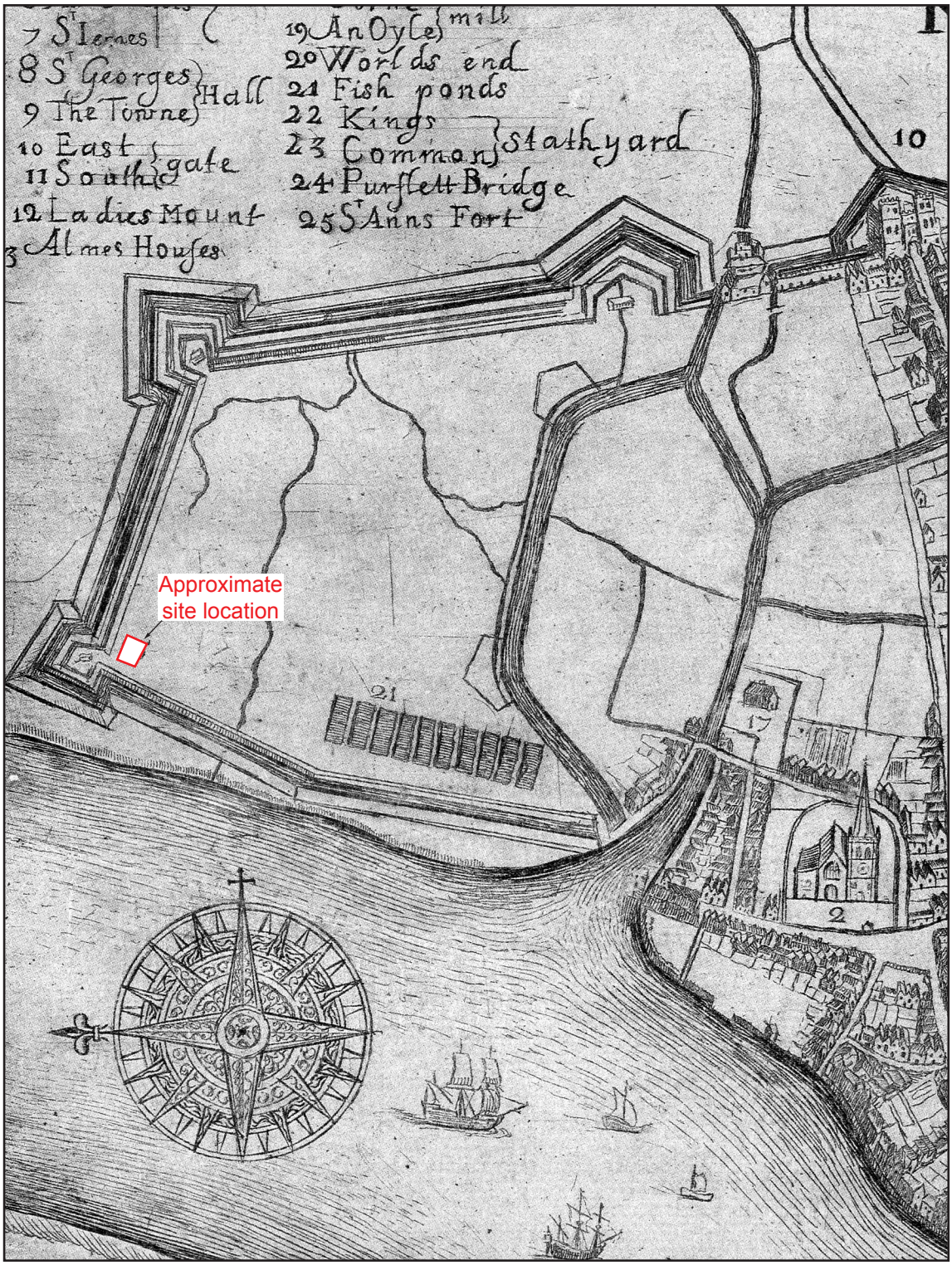

Figure 3. Detail of Bell's Groundplat of King's Lynn (1680)

Fleet). This land is likely to have remained as open salt marsh and seasonal pasture.

The first major developments to the north of the Fisher Fleet appear to have occurred during the post-medieval period, after the town defences were extended northwards (NHER 5486). Although the initial nature of the town's northern defences is somewhat unclear it is known that they were strengthened in 1570-1, when the threat of French invasion led to the creation of St. Anne's fort at the mouth of the Fisher Fleet. A blockhouse was subsequently constructed to the north (Clark and Carter 1977). The town's defences were renewed again in 1642/3 during the Civil War, when King's Lynn was besieged and taken by Parliamentarian forces. Work to the defences was not finished at this time and only completed in 1645 due to the threat of Royalist attack (Clarke and Carter 1977). By this time the northern defences comprised an outer circuit with three bastions and an inner defensive line composed of an artificial channel known as The Loke and two further bastions (Fig. 2). Although the lines of these defences can be readily identified in the modern street layouts their exact nature remains somewhat uncertain. The fortifications appear impressive on Bell's 1680 Groundplat of Kings Lynn (Fig. 3) and later maps mark the line of a wall on the inner side of the earthworks. However it has been suggested that only a simple bank and a minor ditch may have in fact been present to the north of the Fisher Fleet; the exception being the Long Pond, which still survives (Clarke and Carter 1977, 438).

The site lies in the open ground between the two 17th-century defensive lines, close to the north-westernmost outer bastion. The earliest cartographic sources suggest that this land was probably undeveloped at the time the defences were constructed, being designed to create a defended promontory, rather than protect an existing part of the town. Both Bell's Groundplat and William Rastrick's later plan of 1725 depict the area enclosed by the fort as largely empty open ground, crossed by a number of meandering watercourses. It is likely that this area was common land and still subject to flooding (Hankinson 2005). There is however some evidence for light industrial activity in this area during the post-medieval period. There is a record of ash being brought from a saltpan at 'St. Anne's' in 1587 (Parker 1971, 131), although this was probably located at the mouth of the Fisher Fleet (Clarke and Carter 1977). Earthworks that may represent saltern mounds have also been identified to the east and north-east of the site (NHER 27893, 27894, 27906, 27907). These mounds, if indeed salterns, would be composed of the waste produced during salt extraction. Both Bell's Groundplat and Rastrick's plan show a series of substantial fish ponds to the south of the site. Faden's 1797 plan of Lynn (Fig. 4) also shows the (by then disused) fish ponds as well as two brick kilns located in the north-western and north-eastern corners of the outer defences (Barringer 1989, NHERs 14465 and 14466). Additional brick kilns are marked in the area on Bryant's Map of Norfolk in 1826 (Barringer 1998). None of these features appear to have lain within the bounds of the site itself.

By the time that the First Edition Ordnance Survey map was produced in the 1880s the defences no longer stood, although their line is fossilised in the boundaries of the surrounding fields. By this time the area was beginning to take on its present form, with Cresswell Street and surrounding roads laid out (although few house had been built). The present day allotment garden can be clearly seen on aerial photographs taken in 1946.

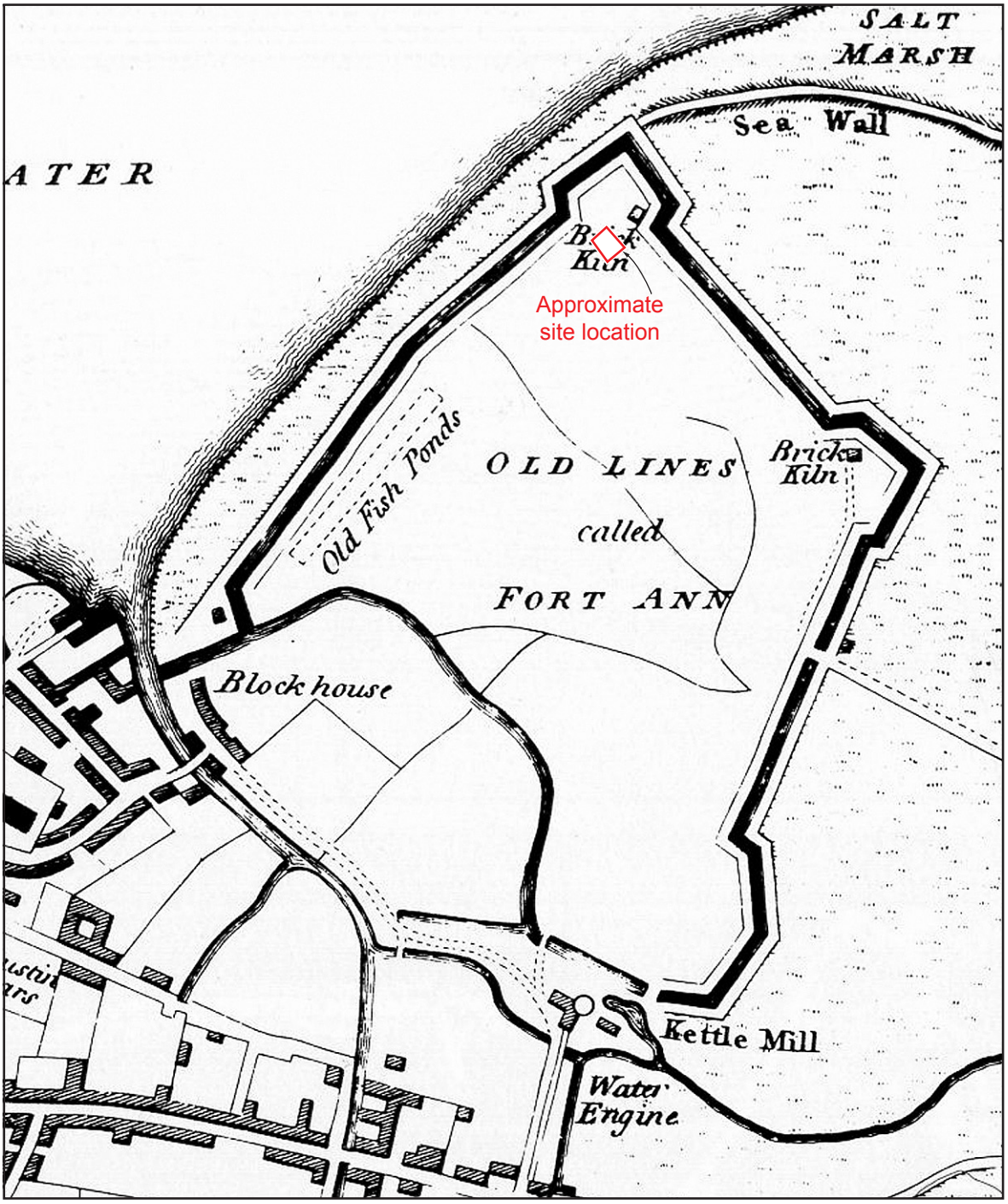

Figure 4. Detail of Faden's plan of King's Lynn (1797)
(reproduced from Barringer, 1989)

Archaeological evidence for past activity within the area enclosed by the town's northern defences is limited, although a number of locations have now been investigated. Two archaeological evaluations have been undertaken at nearby Sir Lewis Street (NHERs 37384, 42012) both of which produced no significant evidence (Nurse 2002; Trimble 2005). A Watching Brief undertaken at the Anglia Cannery site on Edward Benefer Way also recorded no archaeological evidence (NHER 39589). An allotment plot close to the site itself has also been subject to trial trenching, although the features revealed were exclusively of recent date (NHER 50078, Watkins 2007).

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.

The Brief required the examination of a 5% sample of the proposed development area. This was achieved through the excavation of a single trench measuring 15.6m by 1.5m (Fig. 5).

Machine excavation was carried out with a wheeled JCB-type 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.

No environmental samples were taken due to the lack of suitable deposits.

All archaeologically significant features and deposits were recorded using NAU 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.

The temporary benchmark used during the course of this work was transferred from an Ordnance Survey benchmark with a value of 5.11m, located on the side of 22b Lansdowne Road.

Site conditions were good, with the work taking place in fine weather.

5.0 RESULTS

The soft, silty topsoil present on this site proved to be relatively shallow, being no more than 0.25m deep along the trench. Removal of this layer exposed a pale mottled grey yellow silt (Plate 1). This deposit was finely laminated and almost certainly alluvial in nature.

Plate 1. General view of trench, facing east

No archaeologically significant features were present at this depth. A very shallow linear feature visible at the eastern end of was either the base of a cultivation bed or, more likely, a wheel rut created during the clearance of the site prior to this work.

An exploratory sondage was excavated at the eastern end of the trench (Fig. 5, Plate 2). This sondage was dug using the machine and reached a depth of 1.2m. The pale alluvial silts were shown to be approximately 1m deep, fairly homogenous and devoid of notable inclusions. The nature of this material suggests that it was laid down when the site was unenclosed salt marsh, the thin layers of silt resulting from numerous minor inundations of the area. There was no evidence to suggest that the uppermost silts represented recent flooding.

Plate 2. Exploratory sondage, looking north

At the base of the sondage a bluish grey sandy silt was exposed. This deposit was also finely laminated with thin bands of clayey silt clearly visible. These silts may not have been greatly different in nature to the overlying material. The water table was encountered at the base of the sondage which may account for the greyer, gleyed appearance of these silts.

6.0 THE FINDS

A small number of metal objects were found by metal detector within the topsoil layer. These were all of very recent date and therefore not retained.

No finds were recovered from the alluvial deposits.

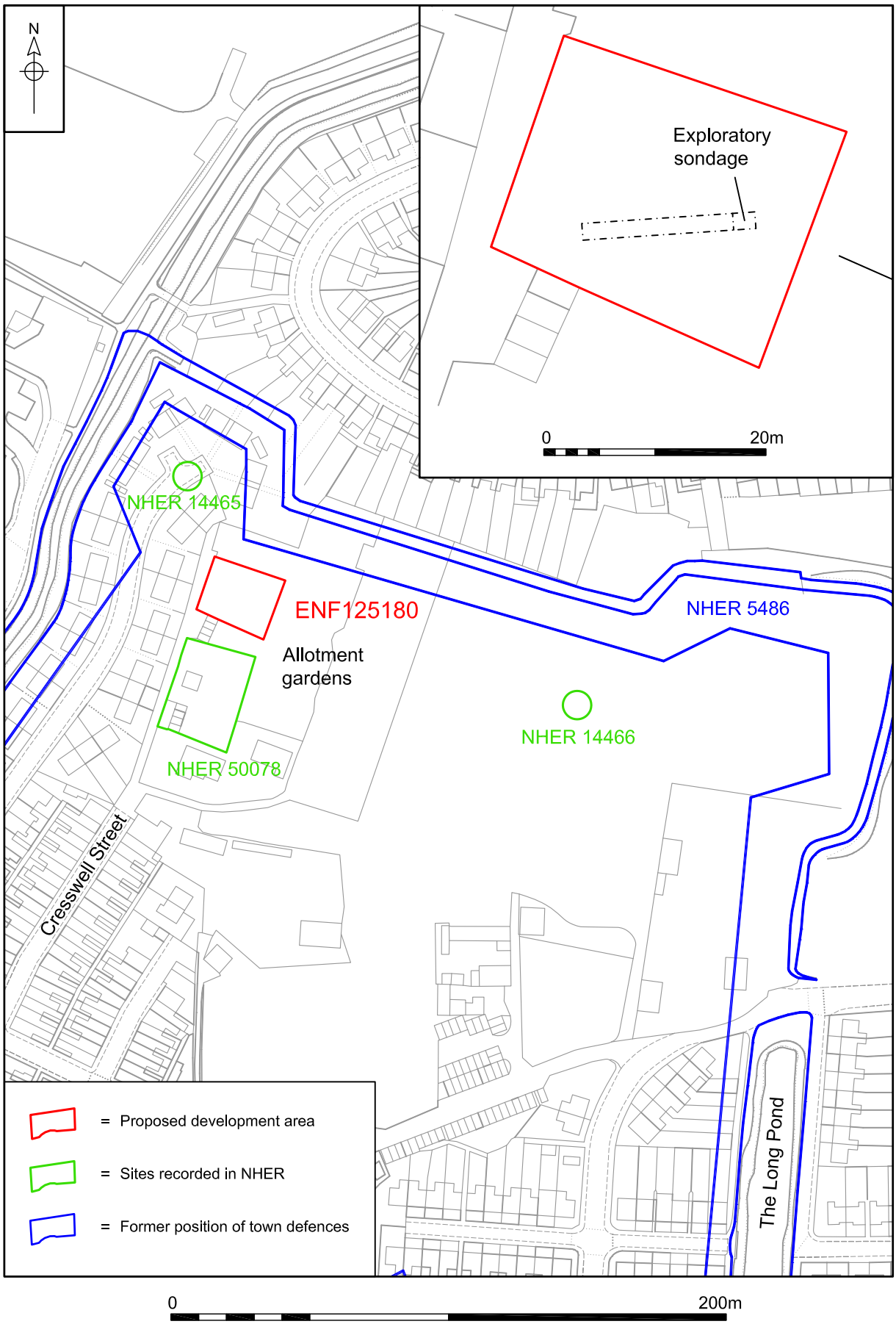

Figure 5. Detailed site location and trench location. Scale 1:2000 (inset 1:500).

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

This evaluation revealed no evidence for archaeologically significant features or deposits within the proposed development area.

The alluvial deposits exposed were most likely laid down during the medieval period, their sterile nature suggesting that this area of salt marsh saw little significant activity during this period.

Although the site fell within the bounds of the town's defences after they were extended in the 17th century, the available cartographic sources indicate that this area remained largely undeveloped until the late 19th century. This picture appears to be confirmed by the absence of significant post-medieval remains both within the trench on this site and within those previously excavated to the south. Neither this evaluation nor the earlier work produced any evidence for the brick kiln known to have been located in the north-west corner of the defences.

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

Acknowledgements

The fieldwork was undertaken by Andy Barnett and the author. The machine was provided and operated by Kelvin Balding.

This report was edited by Jayne Bown and produced by David Dobson. The illustrations were created by David Dobson and the author.

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