

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING REPORT

Munitions Areas 1 and 2, RAF Lakenheath LKH 266

A REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING, 2006
(Planning app. no. F/2006/0020/GOV)

Jo Caruth
Field Team
Suffolk C.C. Archaeological Service

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Lucy Robinson, County Director of Environment and Transport
Endeavour House, Russel Road, Ipswich, IP1 2BX

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Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Summary

SMR information

Introduction

Methodology

Results

Area 1

Area 2

Summary and Conclusion

List of Figures

1. Site location
2. Location of Areas 1 and 2
3. Area 1 plan
4. Sections and plan of features within Length A
5. Lengths A and B
6. Lengths C-G
7. 0008 section and plan
8. Lengths H and I
9. Lengths M and N
10. Feature sections and plan
11. Area 2
12. Length R
13. Ditch 0016 section
14. Plans showing interpretation and summary for each Area

Acknowledgements

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Summary

Monitoring during road widening in Munitions Area 1 and 2 at RAF Lakenheath identified a low density of undated features and evidence for an ancient landscape of dunes and hollows.

SMR information

Planning application no.	F/2006/0020/GOV
Date of fieldwork:	June-August 2006
Grid Reference:	TL 7279 8251 and TL 7317 8222
Funding body:	MOD Defence Estates (USF)
Oasis reference.	Suffolkc1-23605

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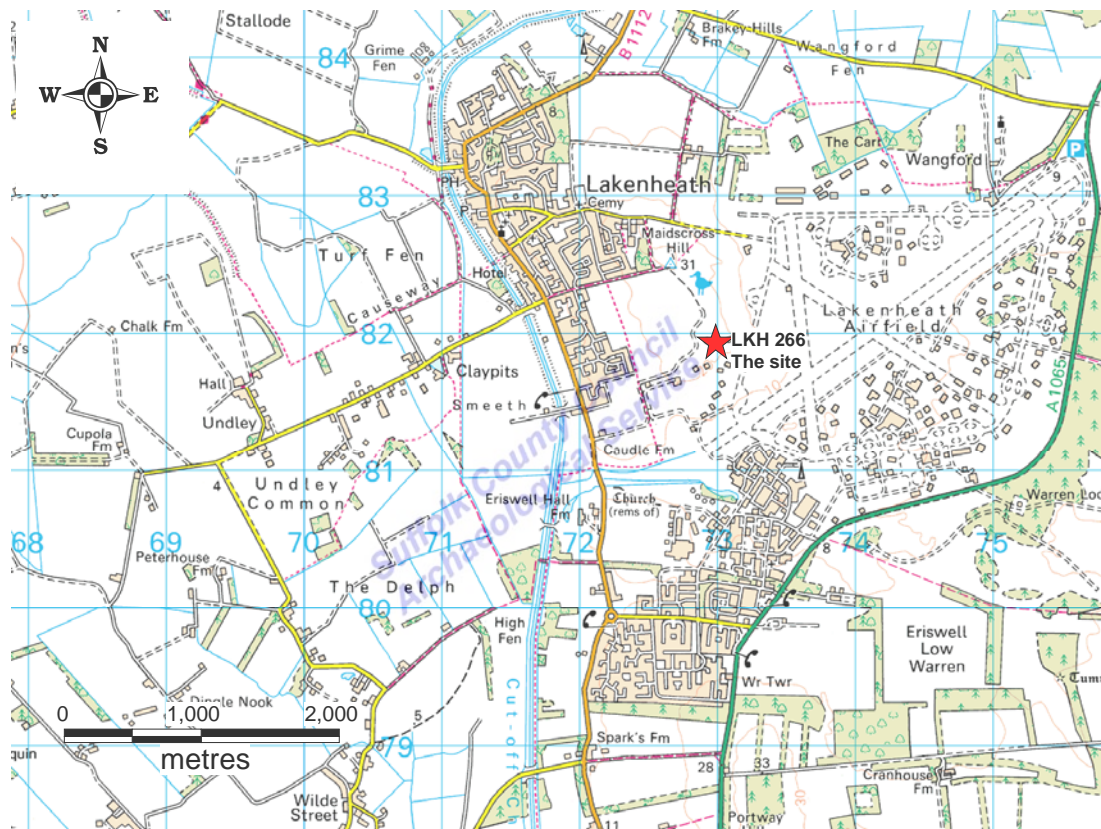
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Introduction

Archaeological monitoring was undertaken in advance of the widening of access roads within Munitions Areas 1 and 2 at RAF Lakenheath (Fig. 1). The work was carried out to an outline brief created by Jude Plouviez, Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service to fulfil a condition on planning application F/2006/0020/GOV. The sites lie at TL 7279 8251 and TL 7317 8222 (Fig. 2) on an east facing slope between 10 and 20 m OD on the west side of the airfield. The new groundworks cut through grassland but much of the area had been completely disturbed by the construction of subterranean 'munitions igloos'. Although RAF Lakenheath has recorded many archaeological sites the only site from near these areas is the findspot of a Neolithic Axe, LKH 149.



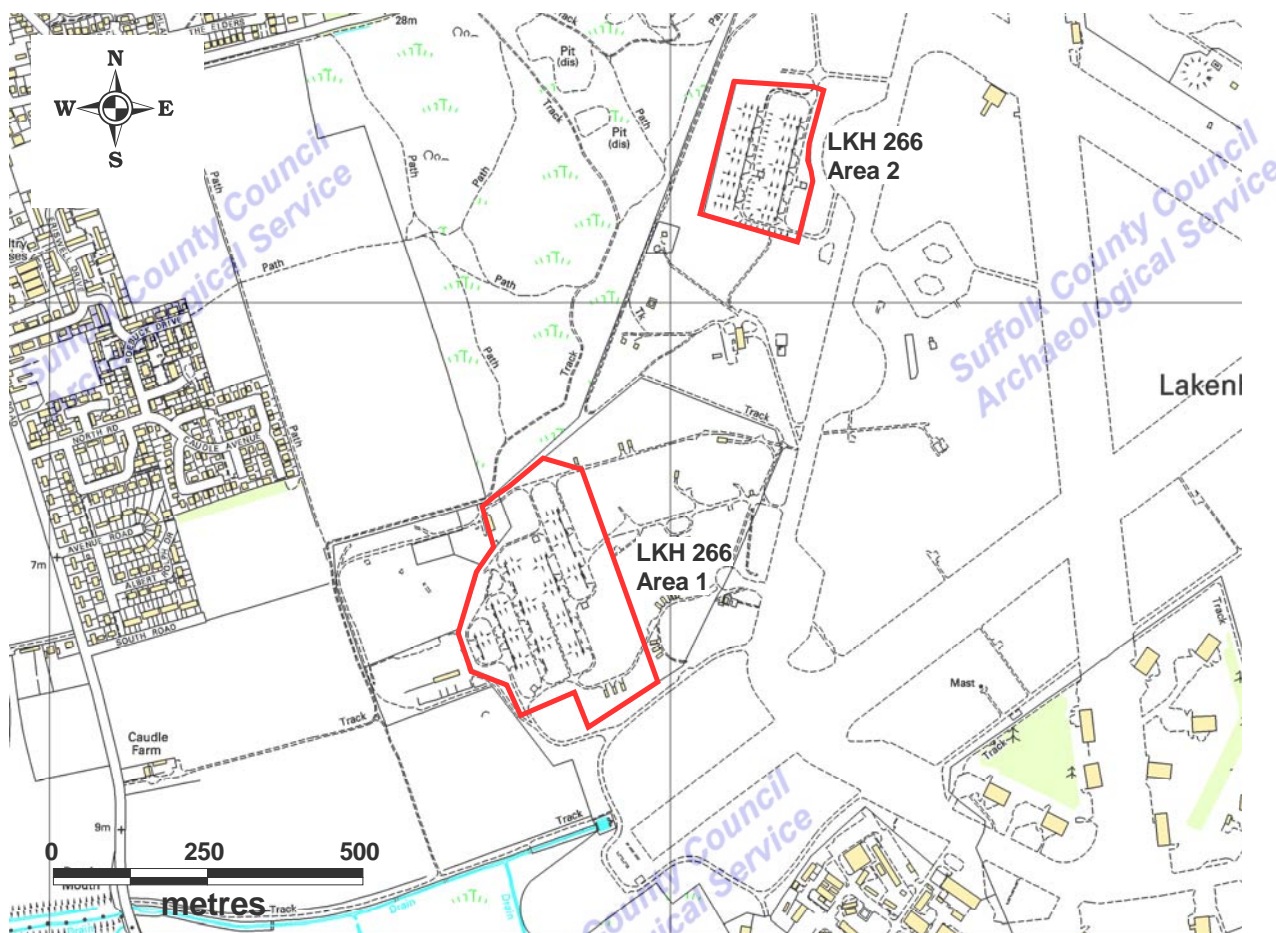
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Figure 1. Site location

Methodology

Regular visits were made during the topsoil stripping for each length of road widening. The surface was walked over and a note made of the ground conditions and depths. Where archaeological features were seen these were hand sampled and sections drawn at 1:20. The location of features was plotted in relation to the overall plan of the development. Stripped surfaces and feature fills were examined for finds, but none were seen. Upcast spoil was being carted away as excavated so this was not examined. No photographs were taken during the monitoring as the sites lie within a secure area of the Base where photography is prohibited.

The site is recorded under the SMR code LKH 266 and context numbers 0001-0017 were issued during the work. These have been inputted onto an MS Access database.



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Figure 2. Location of Areas 1 and 2

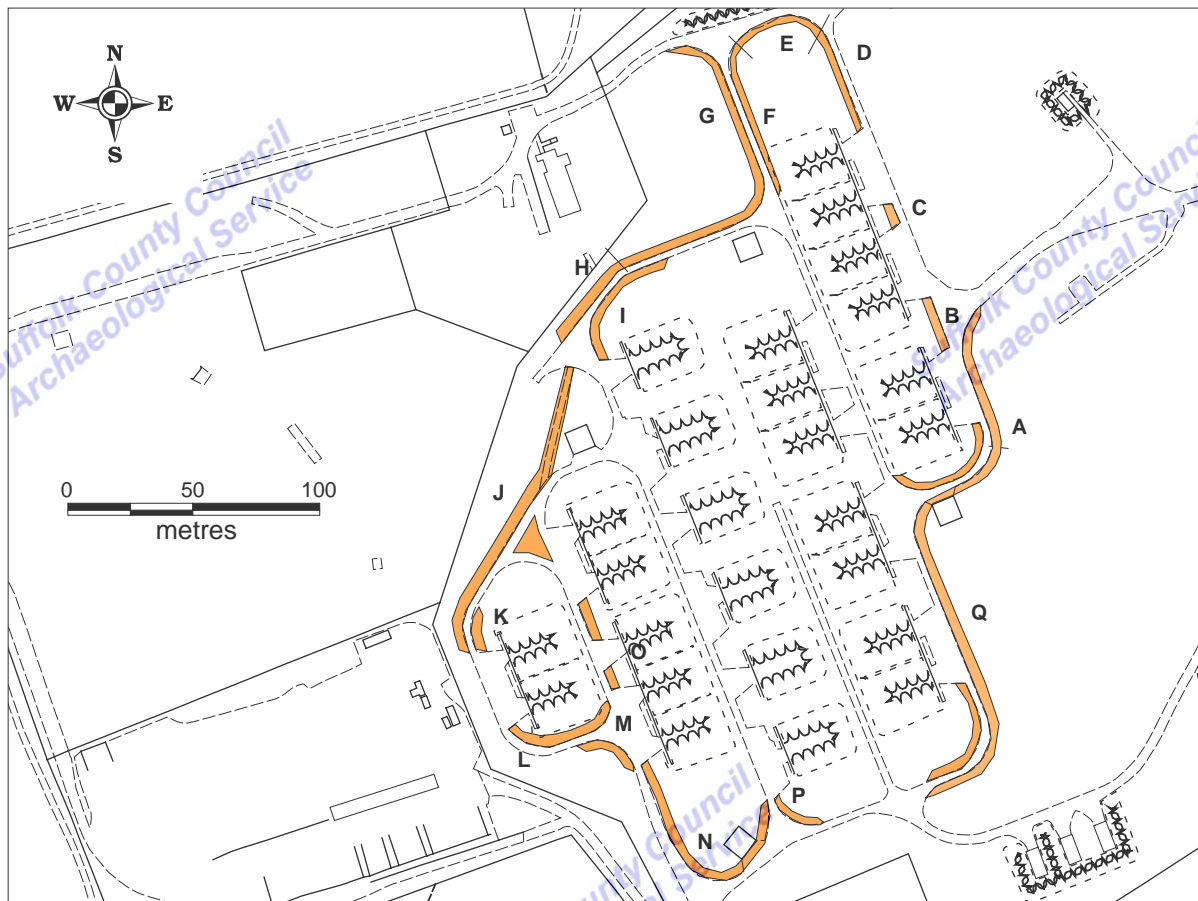
Results

Area 1

This was the larger area with c.1,060m of 3m wide stripping carried out during June and July 2006. The development area is shown on Figure 3 and the results recorded by letter. It is estimated that recently exposed subsoil surface was seen along approximately 40% of the total stripped length.

Length A

This was stripped down by 46cm through turf, modern redeposited sands and dirty, disturbed brown sand onto slightly mottled orange-brown stony sand, 0005. A hand dug section, 0004, showed natural yellow sand at 66cm below ground level (Fig. 4). 0005 is probably a buried topsoil, but there was no clue as to its date. Two ditches 0002 and 0003 (Figs. 4 and 5) were seen cutting 0005, which although indistinct on the surface were confirmed as real features on excavation. 0002 was northwest-southeast aligned, 0.7m wide x 0.2m deep with a flat base and sloped sides and filled with orange-brown stony sand, 0007, similar to 0005 but slightly dirtier. 0003 was northeast-southwest aligned with a triangular profile 50cm wide x 16cm deep and had a similar fill, 0008, to 0002.



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Figure 3. Area 1 plan

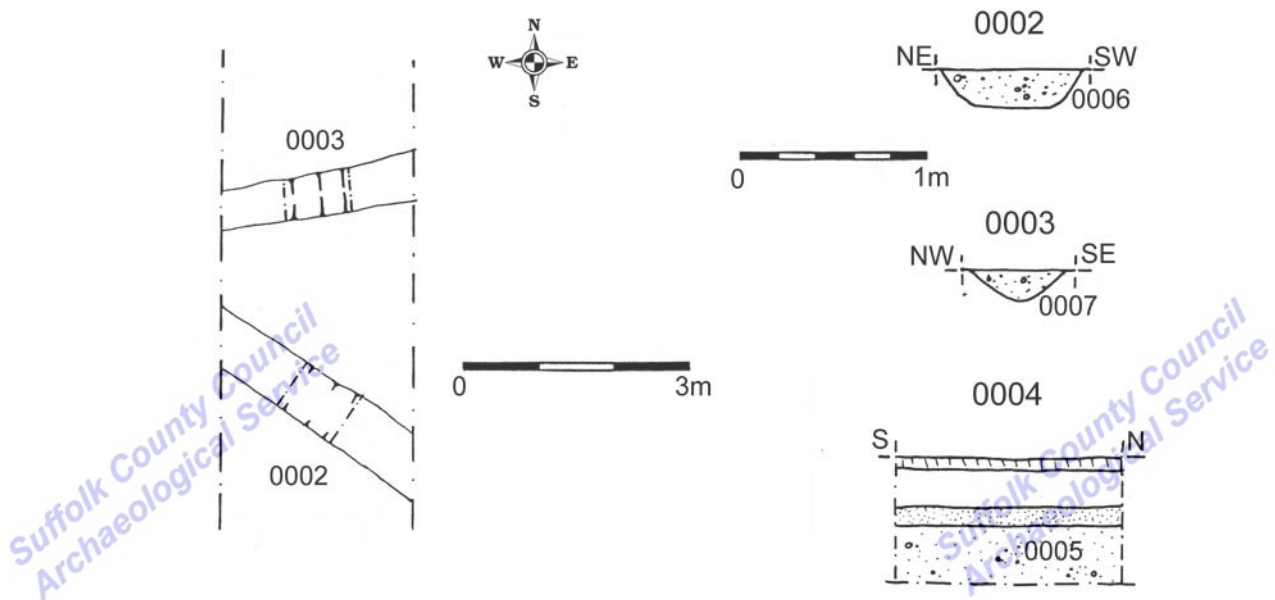


Figure 4. Sections and plan of features within length A

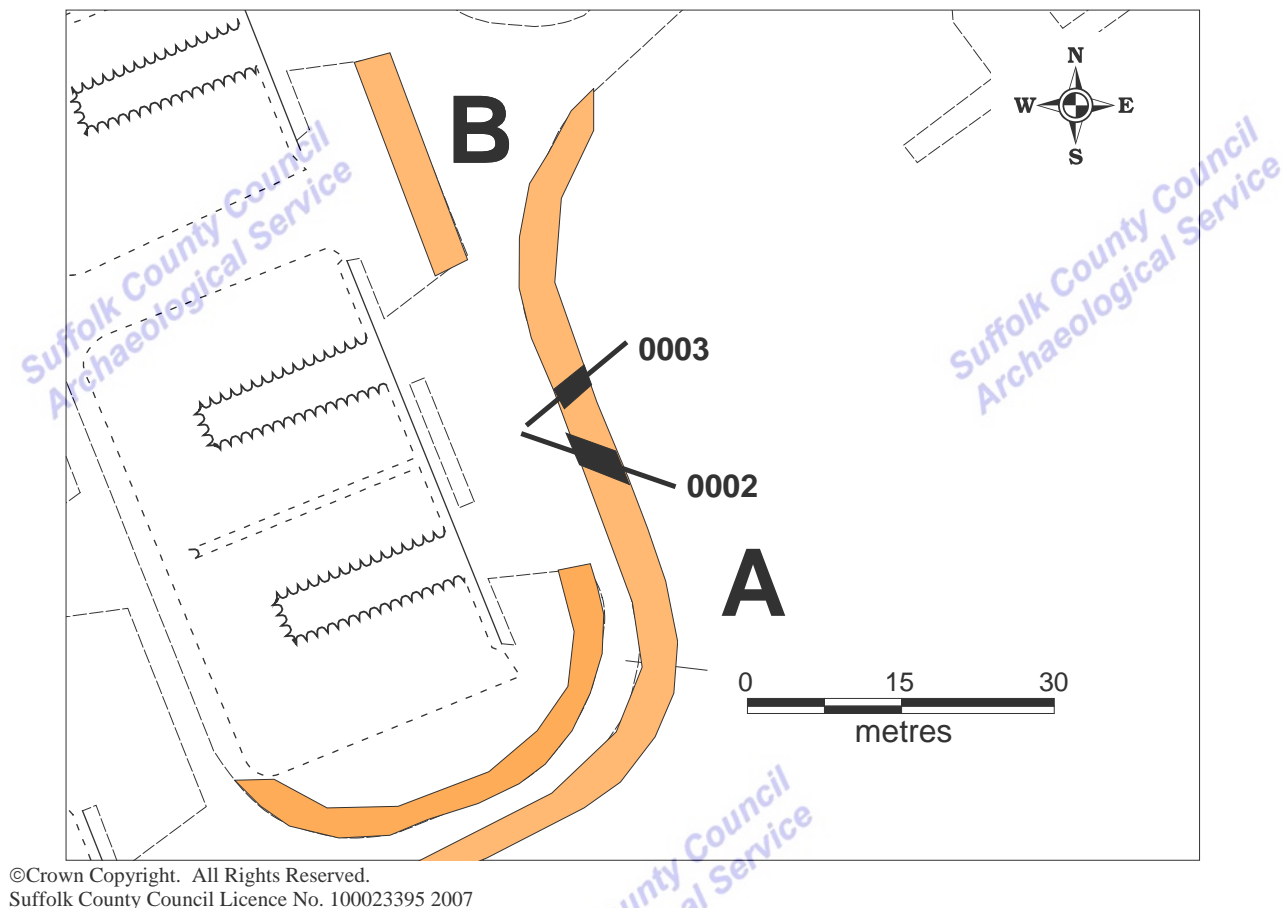


Figure 5. Lengths A and B

Length B

This was stripped to the top of layer 0005, which was found at 60cm from ground level overlain by topsoil and modern redeposited soils.

Length C

This also showed the buried soil layer 0005, but here it lay under 25cm of topsoil and natural sand could be seen at 60cm.

Length D

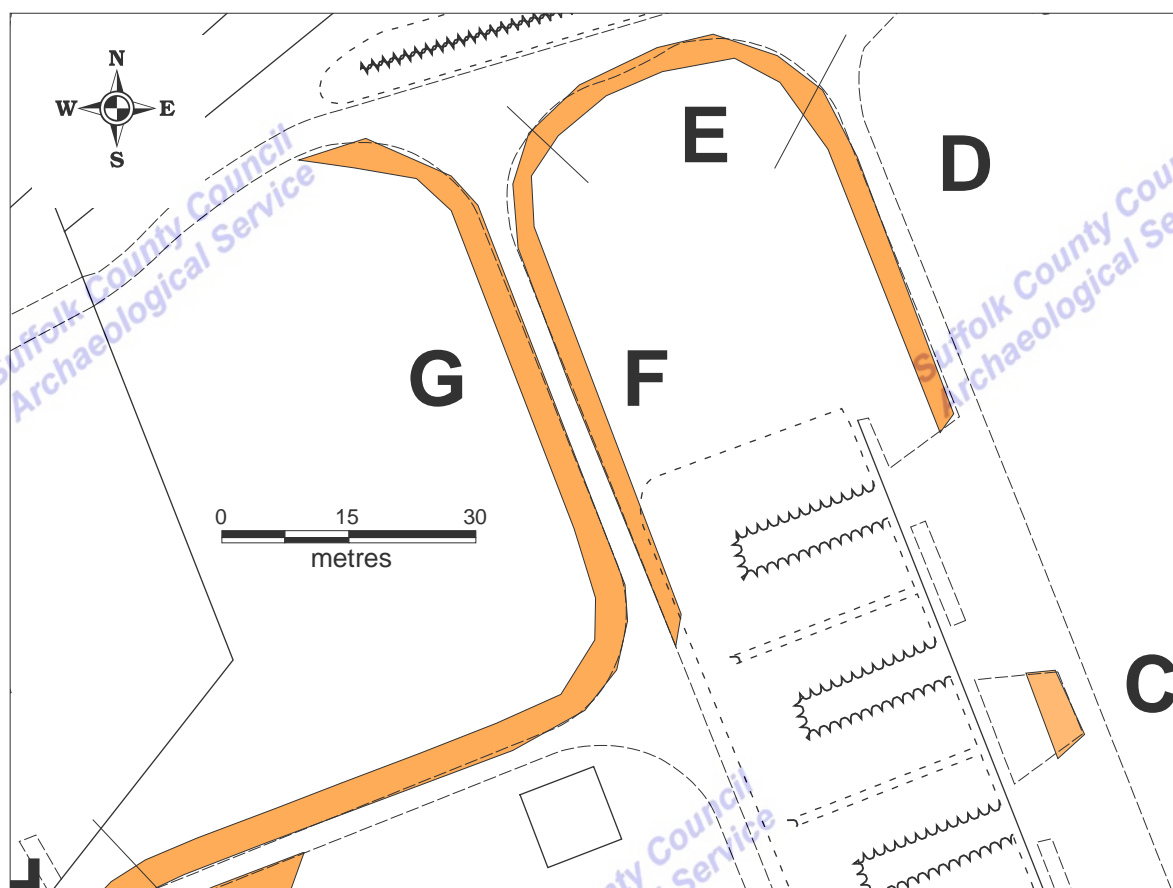
This length was covered in hardcore sub-base at the time of the visit. The top 20cm of the soil profile was visible and this showed all modern redeposited soils.

Length E

This was also filled with hardcore but bright yellow sand and chalk natural could be seen immediately below the turf. No features were visible within this.

Length F

The stripped surface was seen here confirming that the bright yellow sand and chalk seen immediately below the turf was natural indicating truncation of the subsoil surface here, at the top of the slope. There were some modern intrusions but no archaeological features. At the corner of the igloo at the southern end of the length topsoil could be seen to deepen and the presence of the orange-brown stony layer, 0005, could start to be seen between natural and topsoil, indicating an intact subsoil surface.



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Figure 6. Lengths C-G

Length G

This was stripped to 60cm and the soil profile was entirely within made-up ground. It was noticeable on this side of the access road that the topography of the hill was very irregular suggesting extensive dumping and disturbance.

Length H

This showed natural yellow sand at 30cm under a thin, c.5cm layer of orange-brown stony sand and topsoil c.25cm.

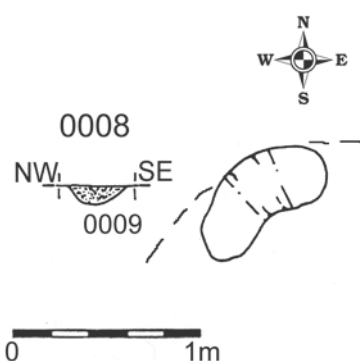
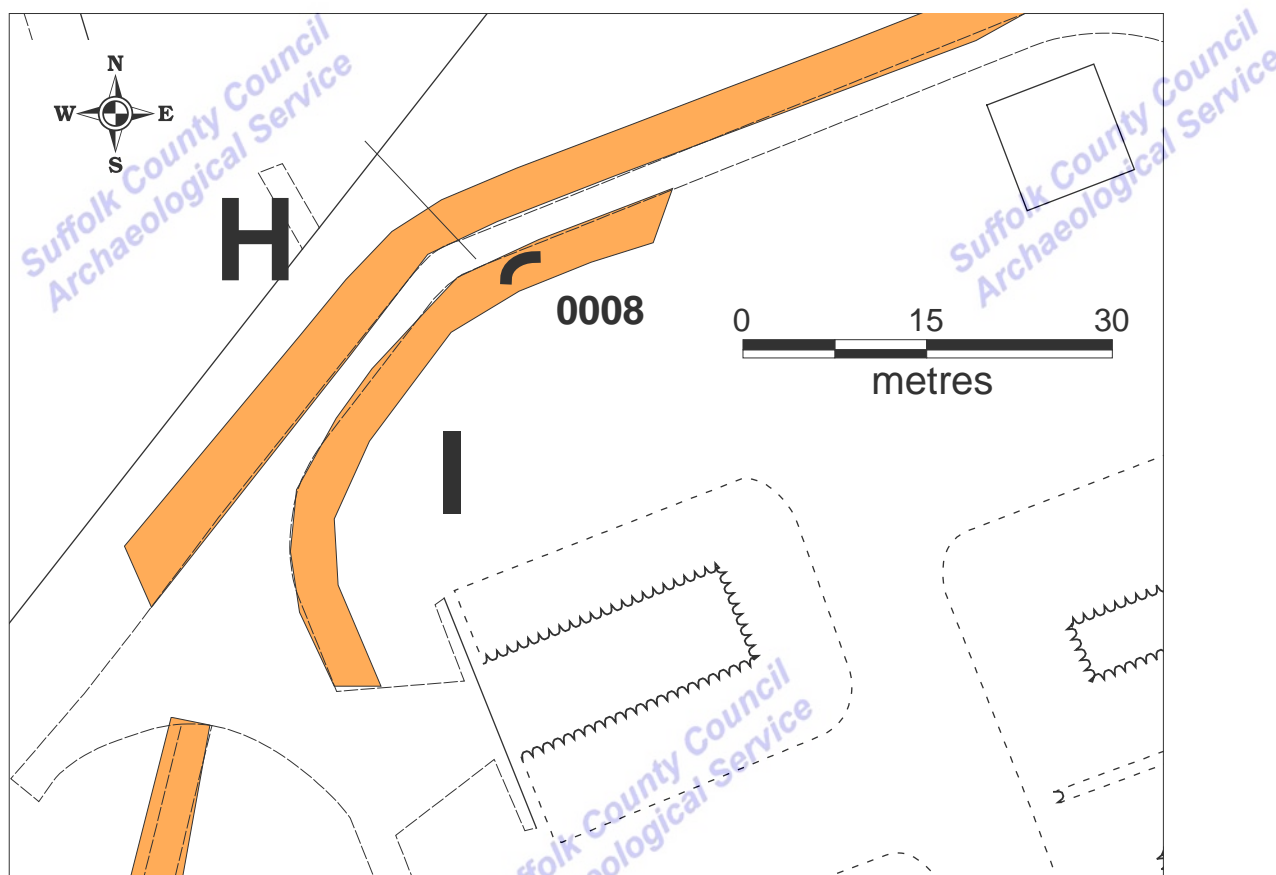


Figure 7. 0008 section and plan

Length I

This showed natural at the base of the strip, c.50cm but here it was patchy and variable with a single curving possible feature, 0008, filled with mineralised sand, 0009, visible (Figs. 7 and 8).

This was investigated and looked to be the outer fill of a natural hollow, with edges disappearing under the upper sand. Other patches were investigated and all interpreted as natural.



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Figure 8. Lengths H and I

Length J

This had hardcore in it and only topsoil could be seen in the section.

Length K

This showed natural sand with chalk patches at c.50cm.

Length L

This showed made-up ground throughout the 60cm depth of the section.

Length M

This showed natural yellow sand at c.50cm below ground level under topsoil and grey-brown sand. Subsoil had been truncated by c8cm by the machining but a small ditch, 0014 (Figs 9 and 10), could be seen in the bottom and section of the strip. This was northwest- southeast aligned c.55cm wide x 16cm deep and filled with coarse mid brown sand, 0015.

Length N

At the northwest end this had a buried soil of orange-grey-brown sand below topsoil which continued below the base of the strip, however within 15m natural yellow sand was showing and at the east end of the strip natural chalk could be found at c.50cm. A single east-west aligned ditch, 0012, was seen. This had a flat base and sloped sides and was 78cm wide x 18cm deep and filled with orange-brown sand, 0013 (Figs. 9 and 10). 3m east of this was a small possible pit, 0010, 35cm in diameter and 20cm deep which was filled with dark, compacted grey-brown sand (Figs. 9 and 10). This fill was not well sorted and is probably modern.

Length P

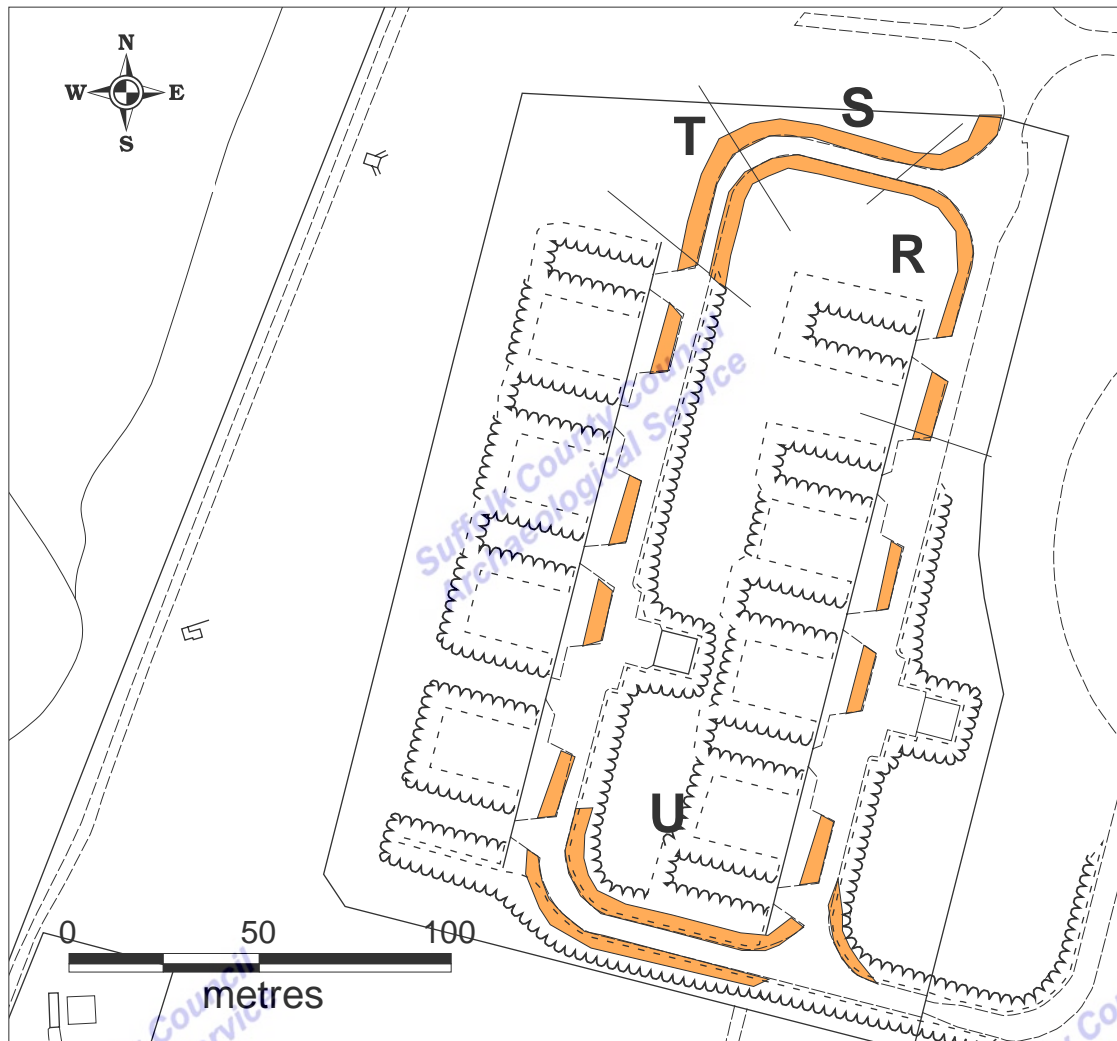
This showed dark brown-black buried soil at the base of the strip, lying under topsoil and redeposited soil.

Length Q

This showed dirty brown sand at the base of the strip gradually changing to orange-brown sand to the north. This profile corresponds to that seen in Length A.

Area 2

This work was carried out in August 2006 and involved c.530m length of road widening (Fig. 11). It is estimated that c. 60% of the stripped subsoil surface was seen in Area 2.



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Figure 11. Area 2

Length R

This showed 15cm topsoil over 20cm of mixed redeposited grey-brown sand which didn't look very recent, over 20cm fine grey windblown sand over a fine yellow-brown windblown sand which was still present at the base of the strip. In front of the north-east corner of igloo 6430 was an east-west aligned ditch, 0016 (Figs 12 and 13), 0.7m wide x 0.25m deep, filled with grey-brown sand, 0017, and which cut the lower windblow. At the south end of this length natural yellow sand could be seen at the base of the strip.

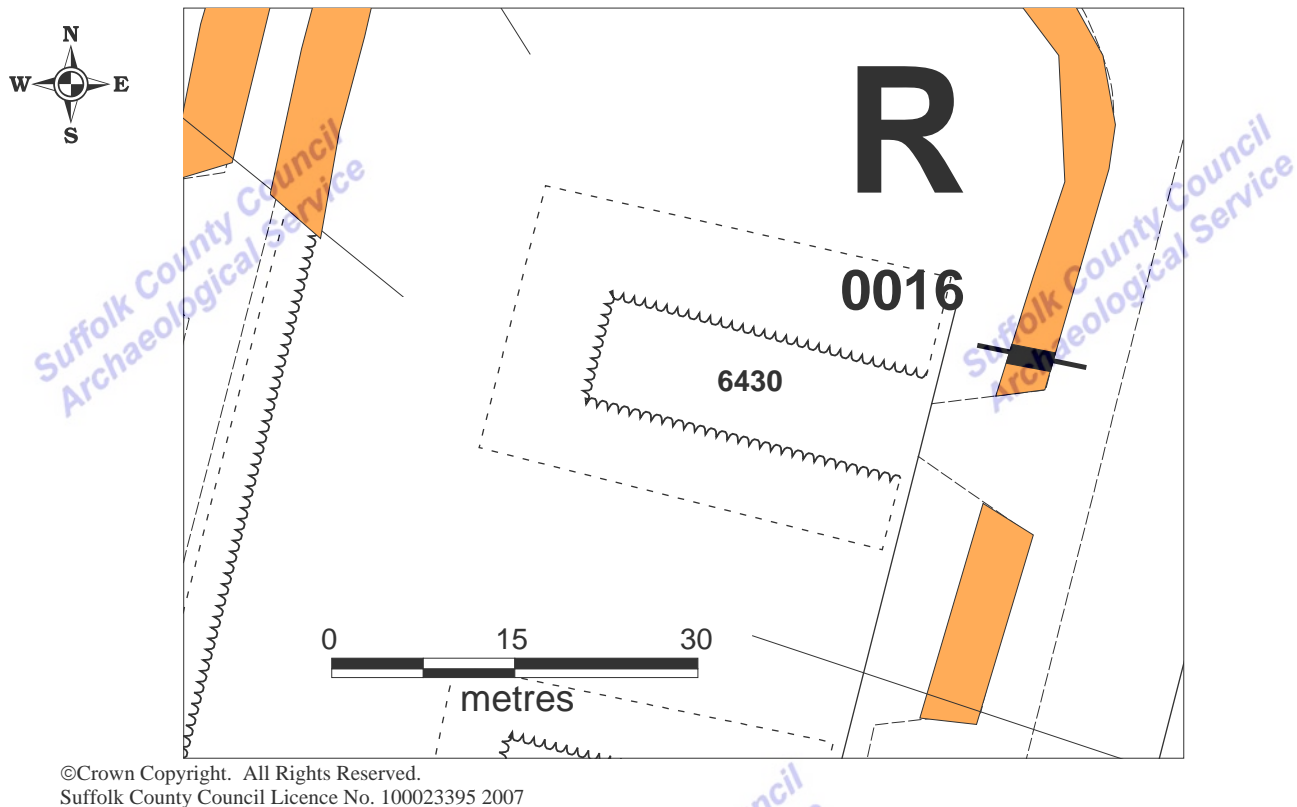


Figure 12. Length R

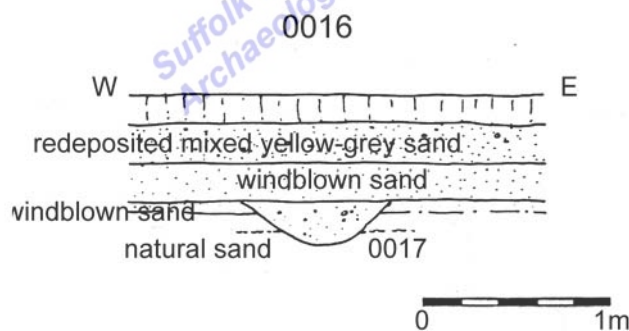


Figure 13. Ditch 0016 section

Length S

This showed natural orange sand at 60cm rising to the west overlain by pale yellow-grey sand, under pinky-grey sand and topsoil.

Length T

This had iron-panned orange natural sand at 45cm, overlain by modern redeposited soil.

Length U

The east and south side of the site showed truncated natural sand immediately under c.15-20cm of topsoil. The natural topography of the hillside could be seen to have been cut into all along here.

Summary and Conclusion

This monitoring revealed a low level of archaeological activity in the form of five ditches (Fig. 14) and a small, possibly modern, pit. Ditches 0003 and 0014 may be the same feature as they broadly aligned, but as these were over 200m apart this cannot be confirmed. No finds were recovered from the monitoring so these features are undated, however the ditches must be of some antiquity as they lie at the base of the soil profile, under windblown sand. The absence of finds within them suggests that they are more likely to be field ditches than associated with settlement activity. There was evidence of modern disturbance in the upper soil profile across most of the area, with truncation of the natural at the north end of Area 1 and the south and east sides of Area 2 (Fig. 14) as a result of which some features may have been lost. It was also clear that the hillside had been subjected to both truncation and redeposition in the wider vicinity around these lengths. Both areas showed evidence of the natural hollows and windblown deposits that characterise this landscape, but the hollows looked dry rather than wet, as would be expected given the location on a slope between 10 and 20m OD. It is notable that there was one length in Area 2 (Fig. 14) with iron panning in the natural which is usually associated with a higher moisture content in the soil.

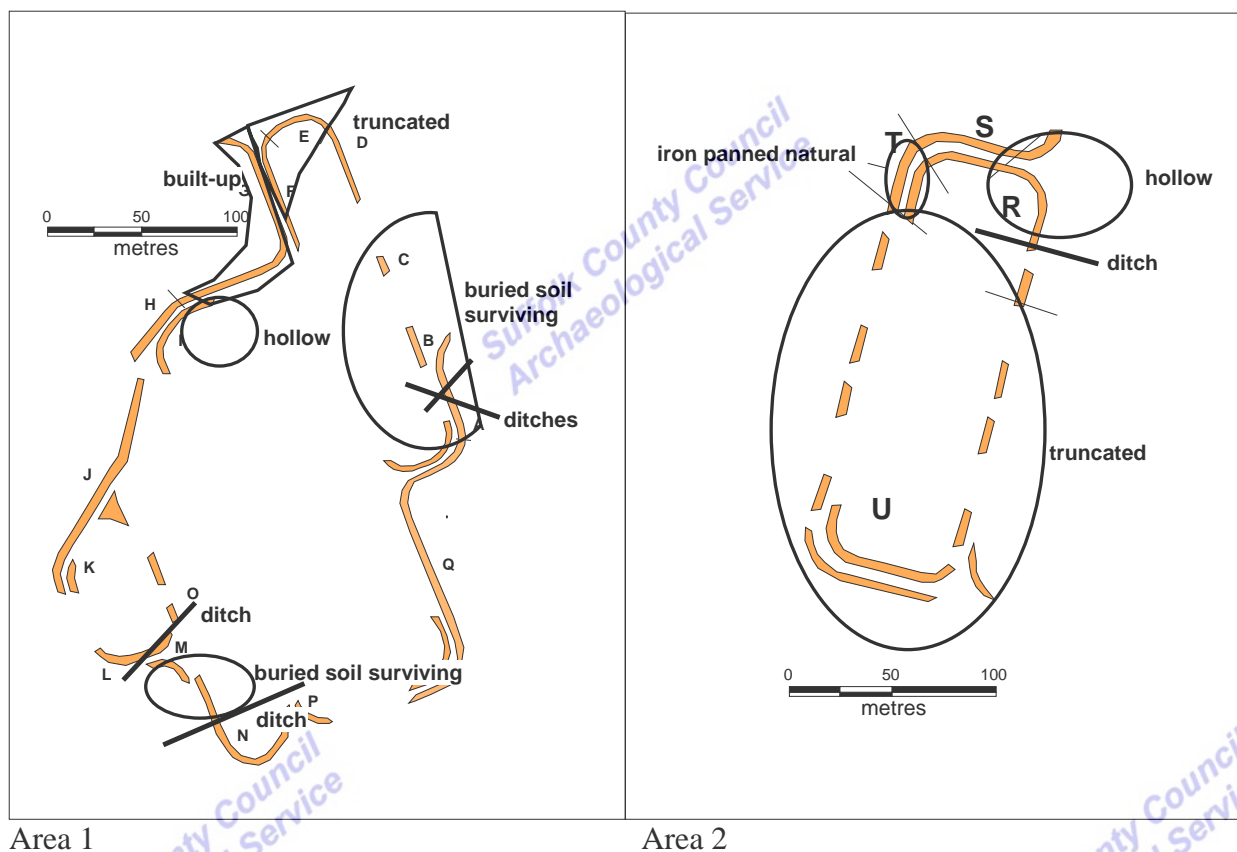


Figure 14. Plans showing interpretation and summary for each Area

Jo Caruth
February 2007