

# **Perimeter Road South, RAF Mildenhall MNL 539**

**Application No. F/2003/0959/GOV  
TL 686 760  
Report No. 2004/118**

## **Summary**

Archaeological monitoring of the soil stripping and associated groundworks for the construction of the final link in the southern perimeter road, RAF Mildenhall, did not locate any archaeological evidence. The road was situated over built up ground and the groundworks were not of sufficient depth to disturb the potential archaeological levels.

## **Introduction**

A series of visits was made to the site from 12<sup>th</sup> July to 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2004 to monitor the groundworks for the construction of part of the RAF Mildenhall perimeter road. The work was carried out to a Brief and Specification issued by Judith Plouviez (Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Conservation Team) to fulfil a planning condition on application F/2003/0959/GOV. The work was funded by the developer, MoD Defence Estates (USF).

Interest in the site was based upon its general location near the Fen edge settlement and occupation zone (Fig. 1). Scattered prehistoric material has been found 400–900m to the east (MNL 020 and 464) while extensive Iron Age and Roman settlement activity has been excavated 1.5km to the north-west (MNL 532). In this part of the airfield however little archaeological work has been done and so there was potential for further prehistoric and Roman evidence to be disturbed by any development.

## **Methodology and Results**

The perimeter road development consisted of the excavation of a strip, c.900m long by 6.5m wide, to the required formation level (Fig. 1). The route of the road closely followed the perimeter fence along an area of open grassland. The majority of this strip of grassland was heavily built up above the level of the adjacent field. A modern bank, up to 1.5m high, ran alongside the inside of the perimeter fence and the road route generally lay on top of this bank. Frequent trenches were also excavated along the route of the road, checking for existing service pipes and cables, which were also monitored.

Excavation of the eastern c.30m of the road footprint involved the removal of existing tarmac to tie the new road into the existing system. This was not observed but it seems unlikely that natural subsoil was exposed. The next c.650m of the road (points A to B) lay almost entirely upon the modern bank. Excavation to the roads formation level through this bank approximately reached, at deepest, the top of the 20<sup>th</sup> century ploughsoil and so the natural subsoil was not exposed. Service trenches throughout

this area only showed cross sections of the modern bank, with the occasional glimpse of natural subsoil at the base of the deepest sections.

The bank ended at point B (Fig. 1), the next c.190m of the road (points B to C) lay on flat grassland which was approximately 0 – 0.2m higher than the level of the field to the south-east. However the excavation at this point was shallower, approximately 0.2-0.5m deep, and only showed a thin layer of topsoil over built up or heavily disturbed ground. A cable trench through part of this section of the road occasionally showed a natural buried soil of mid grey/brown silt/loam with chalk at a depth of 0.4m+. The final c.50m of road was again tied in to the existing road system by removing tarmac and was not monitored.

## **Discussion**

Due to the presence of a modern bank, and the considerable build up of ground levels during the existence of the airbase, the formation level of the road did not expose the natural subsoil or former soil horizons. In many places the excavation only reached a level equivalent to the top of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century topsoil meaning that potential archaeological deposits may still be sealed at depth below the position of the road.

John Craven, August 2004

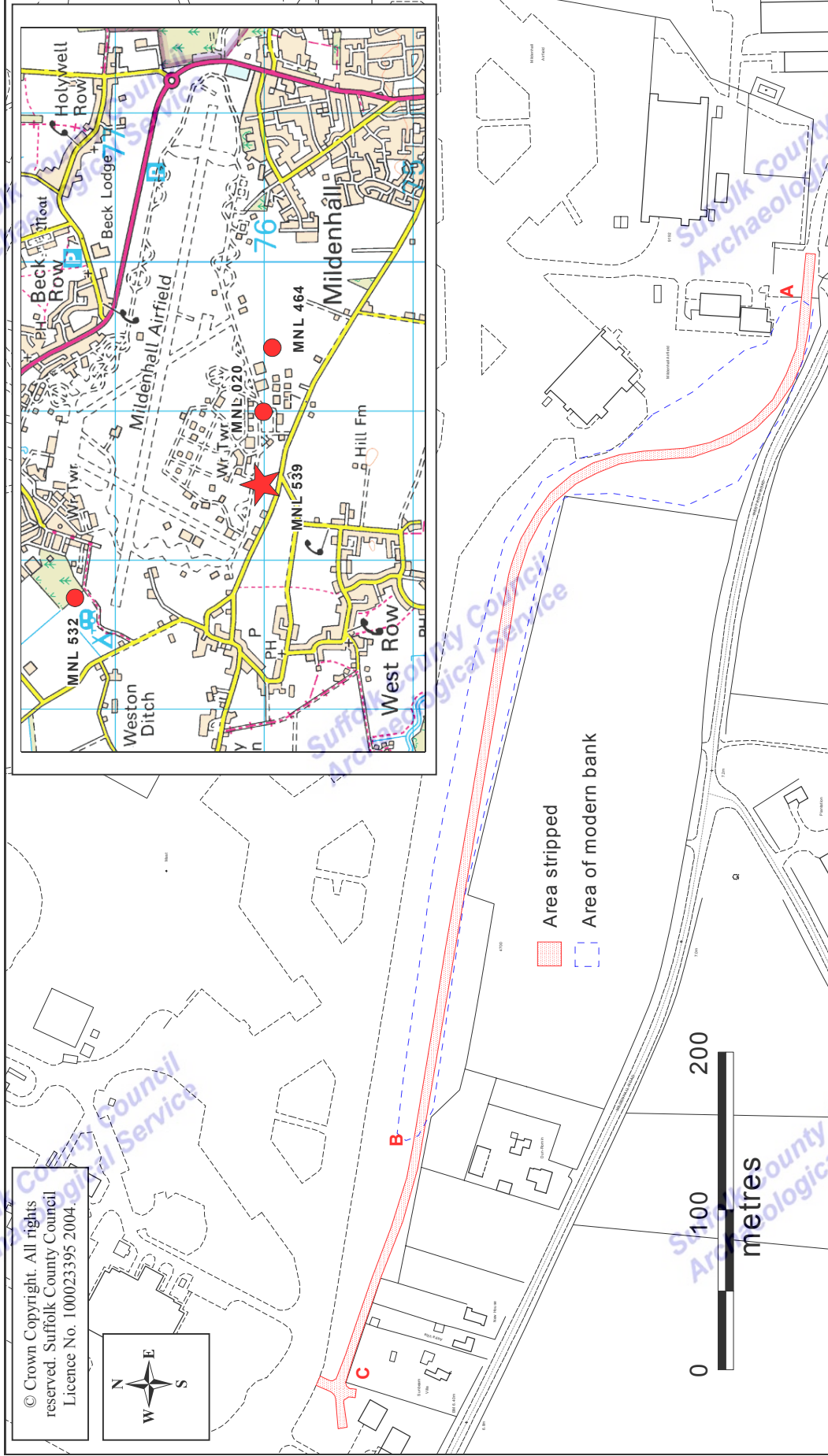


Figure 1. Site plan and location