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ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING REPORT

SCCAS REPORT No. 2009/109

New Car Parks at High Lodge, Santon Downham STN 088

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Summary

An archaeological monitoring was carried out on land at High Lodge, Santon Downham for the Forestry Commission during works to instate two new car parking areas to the north-west of the current car park complex. The work identified a ditch-and-bank earthwork that contained pottery dating to the later Roman period (late 3rd or 4th century).

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1. Introduction

Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service (SCCAS) was commissioned by The Forestry Commission to undertake an archaeological monitoring on land at High Lodge, Thetford. The work was carried out on 15th April 2009 during works to instate two new car parking areas.

The site is located at High Lodge in Thetford Forest, between Brandon and Thetford (Fig. 1).



Figure 1. Site location (marked by red star)

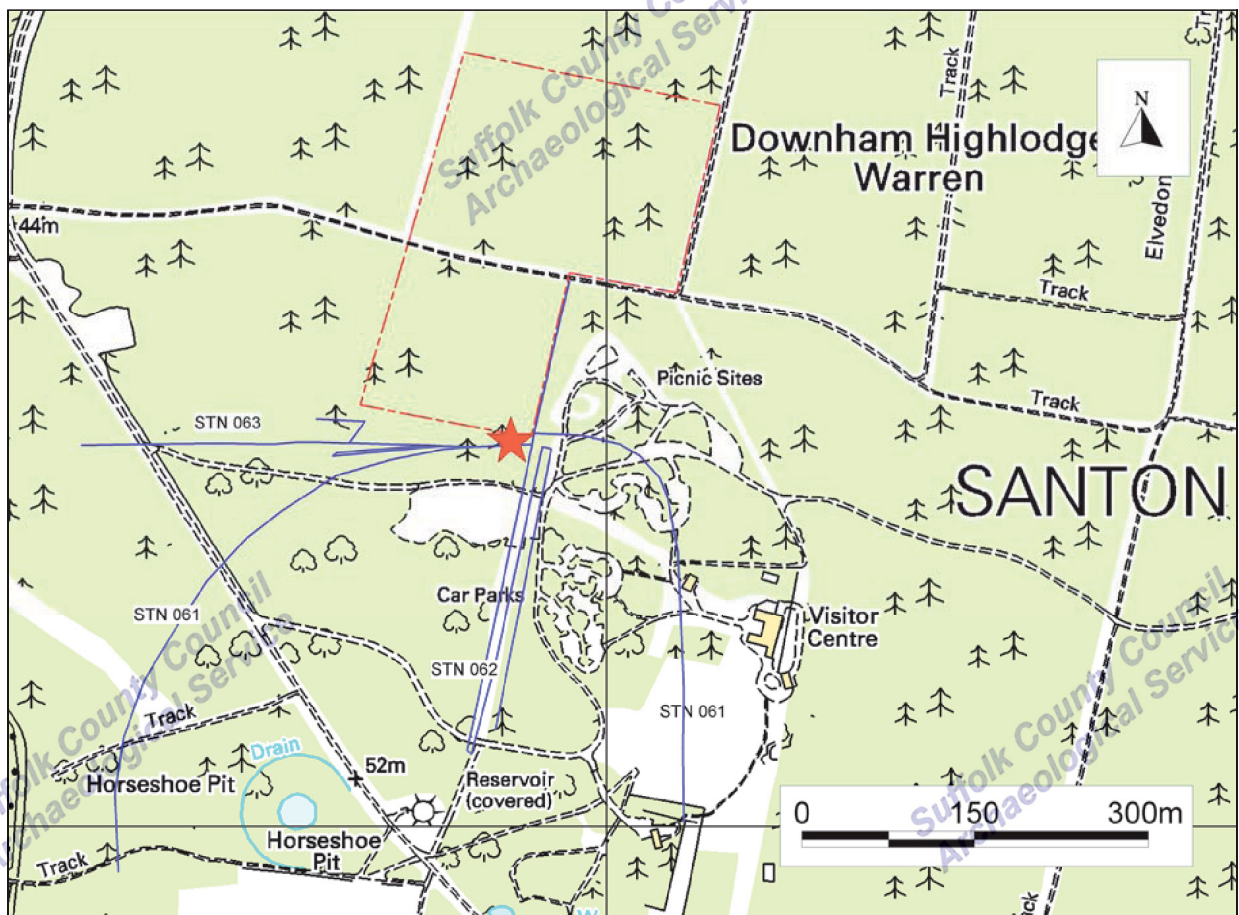
2. Geology and topography

The surface strata at the site comprise blown Breckland sands that overlie glaciofluvial deep sands. The land is largely flat and lies at a height of approximately 50m OD. Prior to development, the area was covered with a moderately dense plantation of pine trees and underlying scrub.

3. Archaeological and historical background

There are a small number of Historic Environment Record (HER) entries in the vicinity of High Lodge, of which STN 063, STN 061 and STN 062 (Fig 2) are of most relevance to this work.

STN 063 is a linear bank earthwork aligned east to west and recorded as extending over 360m from the west of the subject site. It is shown as a discontinuous line partly within a plantation shown on the Ordnance survey map of 1880. STN 061 is an extensive curvilinear double-banked feature, recorded as crossing the south edge of the subject site, which may delineate a trackway associated with a former medieval rabbit warren. It is shown on the 1791 Cadogen estate map (Fig. 15, Rolfe 2008) as the boundary of 'Lodge Field'. The earthwork is possibly associated with a



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Figure 2. HER entries (blue) in relation to the approximate location of stripped areas (outlined red) and trench across earthwork (red star)

second multiple-banked feature (STN 062) aligned approximately north to south and situated within the arc formed by STN 061.

Previous archaeological interventions comprise a series of monitorings carried out in 2002 and 2008. The first (STN 068) identified various banks and associated ditches, as well as evidence of earlier prehistoric activity (Tester 2002) whilst the second (STN 067) located a modern ditch that possibly had earlier origins (Tester 2002). The most recent monitoring (STN 084) identified prehistoric ditches, an oven-type feature and a buried surface in addition to undated ditches presumed to relate to a medieval rabbit warren or 18th century plantations (Rolfe 2008).

4. Methodology

Felling of the trees and the reduction in ground level in preparation for the new car parks took place prior to the commencement of the monitoring, except in two areas (defined during a previous visit by Colin Pendleton (HER Officer)). These areas were highlighted as potential raised areas or 'islands' within the flat landscape that may have been of non-natural origin. A third defined area, located a few metres to the south crossed a banked earthwork, either STN 063 or STN 061.

All three areas were first de-stumped by a tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a giant claw, then stripped of remaining vegetation using a toothless ditching bucket. In the third area, a 7m long by 1.8m wide trench was excavated across the earthwork. Stripping of the raised areas and the banked earthwork only was carried out under the constant supervision of an experienced archaeologist. It was not possible to accurately locate any of the 'islands' or the earthwork during the visit.

After excavation the trench was hand-cleaned and the uncovered linear feature was hand-excavated. Recording of all exposed deposits was undertaken using SCCAS *pro forma* sheets; plans and section were drawn at 1:50 and 1:20 supplemented by high-resolution colour digital images.

No metal-detecting was carried out. One environmental sample was taken.

The site archive is stored in the SCCAS main store at Bury St Edmunds under HER no. STN 088 and a digital copy of the report has been submitted to the Archaeological Data Service at: <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/library/greylit>

5. Results

5.1 'Islands'

A small slot was hand-excavated through the deposits exposed after de-stumping of the more northerly of the two 'islands' in the north-west corner of the square area south of the footpath (see Fig. 2) and identified three layers. The lowest layer was 0003, undisturbed pale whiteish yellow sand, encountered at a depth of 0.42m below ground level. Overlying this was 0002, mid yellowish brown sand, approximately 0.30m deep. The uppermost layer, 0021, was a very mixed deposit comprising pale greyish yellow and mid yellowish brown sands, pale grey ashy patches and areas of decomposing tree stumps and roots. This layer was between 0.10m and 0.15m thick.

After determining that no archaeological deposits or features were present on the first 'island' it was decided that no further monitoring of the second 'island' was required.

5.2 Trench

A single ditch and a posthole were identified in the trench, but despite the prominent east to west aligned earthwork on the surface, no clear evidence for a bank was identified in section.

The natural (0008) in the trench comprised pale yellow sand and was truncated by ditch 0013 and posthole 0017.

Posthole 0017 (Fig. 3) was sub-circular in plan and had a steep, slightly overhanging south-west side and a flat-base. It was more than 0.48m in diameter by 0.32m deep and contained two fills. The earliest fill was 0016, very dark grey compact sand up to 0.15m deep and the latest fill was 0015, 0.2m deep pale orange yellow sand. Burnt flint and two fragments of CBM were recovered from 0016 and a further thirty fragments of fire-cracked flints were recovered from the environmental sample.

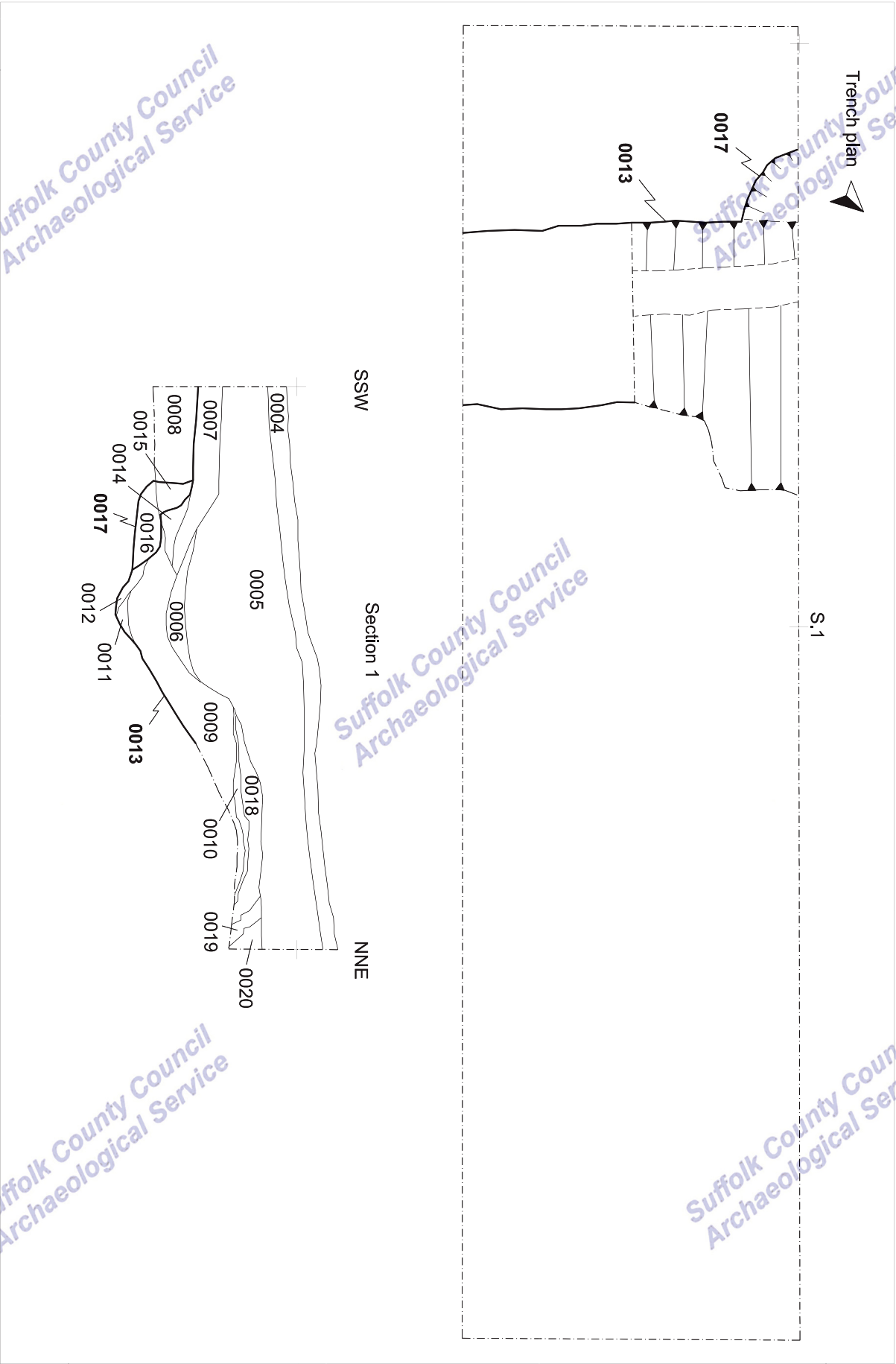


Figure 3. Trench plan and Section 1, scale 1:30 on A4

Ditch 0013 (Fig. 3) truncated posthole 0017 on its north-east side and was linear in plan. It had a wide, irregular, u-shaped profile and was approximately 1.7m wide, although both edges were hard to define due to the mobile and blending nature of the sand. Up to ten associated deposits were identified, but due to the indistinct nature of the ditch's edge, it was only possible to classify deposits 0011, 0012 and 0014 as 'fills'.

The earliest deposit was 0012, mixed mid grey and very dark grey sand up to 0.06m thick. It was overlain by 0011, 0.07m thick pale grey sand. The main fill was 0009, mid brownish yellow sand at least 0.27m thick. Deposit 0014 was located on the south edge of the cut only and comprised dark brownish grey sand. It was 0.11m thick and overlain by 0007, which was very similar in composition but 0.14m thick. 0009 was also overlain by 0010, pale whiteish grey sand surrounded by a thin lens of iron panning. In total it was 0.05m thick. Overlying 0010 was 0018, 0.12m thick pale yellow sand with minor mid orange mottling and swirling that dipped to the north an unknown distance. Two other deposits also dipped to the north, they were 0019, pale grey sand (0.09m thick) and 0020, pale brownish orange sand (0.14m thick). Deposits 0018 to 0020 were not fully excavated due to time constraints. Deposit 0006 was sited over the deepest part of the cut and overlay 0007 and 0009. It comprised mid orangeish yellow sand. At its deepest point, it was 0.11m thick.

Finds were recovered from 0011 and 0016, fill of posthole 0017. They comprise a single, small sherd of Hadham redware, struck flint and a fragment of a 'pot boiler' (0011) and numerous fire-cracked flints and fired clay (0016).

Mid orange grey sand layer 0005 overlay all previously described deposits and was almost certainly a subsoil-type deposit. It was approximately 0.58m thick and sagged into ditch 0013.

The final layer in the exposed sequence was 0004, a topsoil-like deposit, comprising dark grey sand up to 0.1m thick. Due to the removal of tree stumps this layer was heavily disturbed.

No finds were recovered from either 0005 or 0004.



Plate 1. Ditch 0013 and posthole 0017, facing west



Plate 2. Ditch 0013 with bank visible as a ridge slightly right of centre, facing west

6. Finds and Environmental Evidence (Cathy Tester)

6.1 Introduction

Finds were collected from two contexts, as shown in the table below.

Context	Pottery		Fired clay		Flint		Burnt flint		Spotdate
	No.	Wt/g	No.	Wt/g	No.	Wt/g	No.	Wt/g	
0011	1	2			1	11	1	1	LC3/4
0016			1	1			30	183	
Total	1	2	1	1	1	1	31	184	

Table 1. Finds quantities

Three finds were collected from the lower fill of ditch 0013 (0011). A small abraded sherd of Hadham redware, a specialist ware which characterises the later Roman period, belongs to the late 3rd or 4th century. An unpatinated struck flint flake with limited edge retouch is later prehistoric and a tiny fragment of burnt flint potboiler is probably prehistoric as well.

Finds recovered from Environmental Sample 1 taken from the lower fill of posthole 0017 (0016) include 30 fragments of fire-cracked flints weighing 183g and a small abraded fragment of fired clay. Neither material is datable but the burnt flint is often associated with prehistoric activity.

6.2 Plant macrofossils and other remains (Val Fryer)

Introduction and method statement

A single sample for the retrieval of the plant macrofossil assemblage was taken from the dark lower fill of post-hole 0017 (0016), which also contained burnt flint.

The sample was bulk floated by SCCAS staff and the flot was collected in a 300 micron mesh sieve. The dried flot was scanned under a binocular microscope at magnifications up to x 16 and the plant macrofossils and other remains noted are listed in Table 2 below. Nomenclature within the table follows Stace (1997). All plant remains were charred. Modern fibrous and woody roots were also abundant within the assemblage.

Sample No.	1
Context No.	0016
Plant macrofossils	
Tritium sp. (grains)	x
Cereal indet. (grains)	x
Bromus sp.	x
Chenopodium album L.	x
Chenopodiaceae indet.	xx
Fallopia convolvulus (L.)A.Love	x
Galium aparine L.	x
Mentha sp.	x
Small Poaceae indet.	x
Charcoal <2mm	xxx
Charcoal >2mm	x
Charred root/stem	x
Other materials	
Black porous 'cokey' material	x
Sample volume (litres)	10
Volume of flot (litres)	0.3
% flot sorted	50%

Table 2. Plant macrofossils and other remains

Key: x = 1-10 specimens, xx = 11 – 50 specimens xxx = 51 – 100 specimens

Results

A small number of poorly preserved wheat (*Triticum* sp.) grains were recorded along with other cereals, which were too poorly preserved for accurate identification. Seeds from a limited range of segetal and grassland herbs were also present, with taxa noted including brome (*Bromus* sp.), fat hen (*Chenopodium album*), black bindweed (*Fallopia convolvulus*), goosegrass (*Galium aparine*) and mint (*Mentha* sp.). With the exception of charcoal/charred wood fragments, other remains were limited to a small number of pieces of black porous material, most of which were probable residues of the combustion of organic remains (including cereal grains) at very high temperatures.

Conclusions and recommendations for further work

In summary, the assemblage is small and is most likely to be derived from scattered or wind-blown refuse, much of which was probably accidentally included within the post-hole fill. The source of the material is unclear; the presence of seeds of segetal and grassland herbs may indicate that the assemblage is composed of detritus from more than one source, although it should be noted that both crop processing waste and dried herbage were commonly used together as fodder and domestic fuel.

As the density of material within the current assemblage is insufficient for quantification (i.e. <100 specimens), no further work is recommended.

6.3 Discussion of the material evidence

The sparse finds assemblage is not indicative of intense activity on this site. It includes a single later prehistoric struck flint flake and burnt flint which may possibly be prehistoric and a single sherd of Roman pottery from the ditch which is small enough to be residual and not sufficient dating evidence for the feature. The small macrofossil assemblage is most likely to have been wind blown or scattered mixed material included by chance in the feature.

7. Discussion

Monitoring of the northernmost of the 'islands' revealed a very slight raised area of which the upper 0.15m was heavily disturbed by tree roots. The underlying deposit (0002) had a subsoil-like quality with a small amount of humic material present, presumably derived from annual leaf fall. A lack of finds suggests that it may have been a windblown layer that accumulated around the base of the trees.

The short trench excavated across the known and extant earthwork confirmed the presence of a ditch (0013), but did not contain clear evidence for a bank, despite this aspect being very clear on the ground surface. A small sherd of Roman pottery was recovered from the base of the ditch (0011), but may not necessarily date it as it is probably residual. It is worth noting that a similar scenario occurred at 'Downham (High) Lodge', where abraded Roman pottery was recovered from the base of the ditch of a Medieval rabbit warren. Other finds included a struck flint flake and a tiny fragment of burnt flint potboiler that are commonly of prehistoric origin, but frequently found as 'background' artefacts in later features.

It is interesting that evidence for the bank does not survive well below ground and may be a reflection of the mobile nature of the sands, which would not form a stable surface. The section suggests that possible earlier bank material (0010, 0018 – 0020) is now sealed by subsoil 0005, which has lapped over those layers and helped to retain the shape visible on the ground.

Posthole 0017 may be of prehistoric origin as suggested by the presence of thirty fragments of fire-cracked flints (recovered from environmental sample 1) although no other dating evidence was recovered. Macrofossils remains also recovered from the

environmental sample were probably wind blown rather than deliberately deposited, but do suggest that the land use at the time was open with perhaps some settlement and animal husbandry occurring nearby.

8. Conclusions

Whilst only a minor intervention occurred at High Lodge, it has been possible to demonstrate that the 'islands' observed during a previous visit are of non-anthropological origin and also to establish a potential post-Roman date for part of a ditch-and-bank earthwork (STN 063). This same earthwork was excavated during a monitoring in 2008 during the instatement of a ducting trench (Trench 6, ditch 0047, Fig. 5, Rolfe 2008), although no dating evidence was recovered at that point. Evidence of earlier occupation, probably of prehistoric date, was also confirmed by the presence of posthole 0017.

9. Archive deposition

Paper and photographic archive: SCCAS Bury St Edmunds T:arc\ALL_site\Santon Downham\STN 088 High Lodge new car park

Finds and environmental archive: SCCAS Bury St Edmunds H / 81 / 2

10. List of contributors and acknowledgements

The monitoring was carried out by Mo Muldowney from Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, Field Team and managed by Colin Pendleton.

Finds and environmental processing was carried out by Rebekah Pressler and Anna West, and the specialist finds report was produced by Cathy Tester. Other specialist identification and advice was provided by Val Fryer. The report was edited by Colin Pendleton.

11. Bibliography

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Disclaimer

Any opinions expressed in this report about the need for further archaeological work are those of the Field Projects Team alone. Ultimately the need for further work will be determined by the Local Planning Authority and its Archaeological Advisors when a planning application is registered. Suffolk County Council's archaeological contracting services cannot accept responsibility for inconvenience caused to the clients should the Planning Authority take a different view to that expressed in the report.

Appendix 1. Context summary

Context	Cut	Description	Width	Depth
0001	-	Unstratified finds number	-	-
0002	-	Mid yellowish brown sand, loose	-	0.42m
0003	-	Pale whiteish yellow sand, loose	-	0.10m+
0004	-	Dark grey sand, loose	-	0.10m
0005	-	Mid orange grey sand, slightly mottled, loose	-	0.58m
0006	-	Mid yellowish orange sand, loose	-	0.11m
0007	-	Dark brownish grey sand, loose	-	0.14m
0008	-	Pale yellow sand, loose	-	0.24m
0009	-	Mid brownish yellow sand, mottled, loose	-	0.27m+
0010	-	Pale whiteish grey sand, loose. Thin orange iron pan on outside edges	-	0.05m
0011	0013	Pale grey sand, compact	-	0.07m
0012	0013	Mixed mid grey and very dark grey sand, loose	-	0.06m
0013	0013	Linear. Irregular, stepped, wide U-shape. Rounded base with slight dip at centre	1.70m	0.78m
0014	0013	Very similar to 0007	-	0.11m
0015	0017	Pale orange yellow sand, loose	-	0.20m
0016	0017	Very dark grey (black) sand, compact	-	0.15m
0017	0017	Sub-circular in plan. Flat base with slightly overhanging west side	0.48m	0.32m
0018	-	Pale yellow sand with mid orange mottling and swirls, loose	-	0.12m
0019	-	Pale grey sand, loose. Indistinct edges	-	0.09m
0020	-	Pale brownish orange sand, loose	-	0.14m