
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS LTD

**ASH CLOSE, BARNHAM CROSS,
THETFORD, NORFOLK**

**MONITORING OF WORKS UNDER ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SUPERVISION AND CONTROL**

Authors: Peter Thompson MA (Desk-based assessment) Adam Dyson (Fieldwork & report)	
NGR: TL 8577 8180	Report No. 3337
District: Breckland	Site Code: 52911
Approved: Claire Halpin	Project No: P3528
Signed:	Date: July 2009

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OASIS SUMMARY SHEET

Project details			
Project name	<i>Ash Close, Barnham Cross, Thetford, Norfolk</i>		
<i>In July 2009 Archaeological Solutions (AS) conducted a programme of monitoring works under archaeological supervision and control at Ash Close, Barnham Cross, Thetford, Norfolk. The monitoring was undertaken during groundworks associated with the construction of three dwellings.</i>			
<i>Thetford was a site of great importance in the prehistoric, Roman, Saxon and early medieval periods. The site lies outside the known extent of settlement of the Saxon and medieval towns, but occasional archaeological finds from back gardens, in particular Late Saxon gilded bronze enamel metal work (HER 299443) indicated a potential for archaeological finds.</i>			
<i>The groundworks encompassed the excavation of foundation trenches. Two features were present comprising a small ditch (F1004) and a large chalk extraction pit (F1006), neither yielded finds. The only datable material was a layer of modern building debris in the south-western corner of the site.</i>			
Project dates (fieldwork)	7 – 8 July 2009		
Previous work (Y/N/?)	N	Future work	N
P. number	P3528	Site code	52911
Type of project	<i>Archaeological monitoring and recording</i>		
Site status			
Current land use	<i>Garages</i>		
Planned development	<i>Three dwellings</i>		
Main features (+dates)	<i>Small ditch, quarry pit</i>		
Significant finds (+dates)	<i>No finds present</i>		
Project location			
County/ District/ Parish	<i>Norfolk</i>	<i>Breckland</i>	<i>Thetford</i>
HER/ SMR for area	<i>Norfolk HER (Gressenhall)</i>		
Post code (if known)	-		
Area of site			
NGR	<i>TL 8577 8180</i>		
Height AOD (max/ min)	<i>35m OD</i>		
Project creators			
Brief issued by	<i>Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (James Albone)</i>		
Project supervisor/s (PO)	Adam Dyson		
Funded by	Brooks & Wood Ltd		
Full title	<i>Ash Close, Barnham Cross, Thetford, Norfolk; Monitoring of works under archaeological supervision and control.</i>		
Authors	<i>Dyson, A. & Thompson P,</i>		
Report no.	3337		
Date (of report)	<i>July 2009</i>		

ASH CLOSE, BARNHAM CROSS, THETFORD, NORFOLK MONITORING OF WORKS UNDER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SUPERVISION AND CONTROL

SUMMARY

In July 2009 Archaeological Solutions (AS) conducted a programme of monitoring of works under archaeological supervision and control at Ash Close, Barnham Cross, Thetford, Norfolk (NGR TL 8577 8180). The supervision was undertaken during groundworks associated with the construction of three dwellings.

Thetford was a site of great importance in the prehistoric, Roman, Saxon and early medieval periods. The site lies outside the known extent of settlement of the Saxon and medieval towns, but occasional archaeological finds from back gardens, in particular the Late Saxon gilded bronze enamel metal work (HER 299443; TL 8584 8178) indicated a potential for archaeological finds.

The groundworks encompassed the excavation of foundation trenches. Two features were present comprising a small ditch (F1004) and a large chalk extraction pit (F1006), neither yielded finds. The only datable material was a layer of modern building debris in the south-western corner of the site.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 On 7th and 8th July 2009 Archaeological Solutions conducted a programme of monitoring of works under archaeological supervision and control at Ash Close, Barnham Cross, Thetford, Norfolk (NGR TL 8577 8180; Fig. 1). The supervision and control was commissioned by Brooks & Wood Ltd. It was undertaken in compliance with a planning condition imposed by Breckland District Council (based on the advice of Norfolk Landscape Archaeology). The condition was attached to planning permission for the construction of three dwellings (Planning Ref. 3PL/2009/0067/F).

1.2 The monitoring adhered to a brief issued by NLA (dated 04/06/09) and a specification prepared by AS (dated 08/06/09). It followed the procedures outlined in the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (revised 1999) and also the relevant sections of the document *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (Gurney 2003).

1.3 The main objective of the monitoring were:

- To ensure the archaeological excavation and monitoring of all aspects of the development programme likely to affect buried archaeological remains

- to secure the adequate recording of any archaeological remains revealed by the development programme
- to secure the full analysis and interpretation of the site archive and the appropriate publication of the project results, if required
- to secure the analysis, long term conservation and storage of the project archive.

Planning policy context

1.4 The relevant planning policies which apply to the effect of development with regard to cultural heritage are Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 'Planning and the Historic Environment' (PPG15) and Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 'Archaeology and Planning' (PPG16) (Department of the Environment).

1.5 PPG16 (1990) is the national Planning Policy Guidance Note which applies to archaeology. It states that there should always be a presumption in favour of preserving nationally important archaeological remains in situ. However, when there is no overriding case for preservation, developers are required to fund opportunities for the recording and, where necessary, the excavation of the site. This condition is widely applied by local authorities.

1.6 PPG15 (1994) is the national Planning Policy Guidance Note which applies to the conservation of the historic environment by protecting the character and appearance of Conservation Areas and protecting listed buildings (of architectural or historical interest) from demolition and unsympathetic change and safeguarding their settings as far as is possible. This condition is also widely applied by local authorities.

2 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

2.1 The site is situated in an industrial estate on the south-east edge of Thetford. To the north lie the river Little Ouse and the core of the historic town, to the west Thetford Forest, to the south Thetford Heath and to the east Barnham Common and playing fields, with the Little Ouse beyond having curved southwards.

3 THE EVIDENCE

3.1 Topography, geology and soils

3.1.1 The site is located at approximately 35m OD with the land sloping gently to the north and east down to the Little Ouse 1.5 km away. The local geology comprises Upper Cretaceous chalk. Barnham itself, predominantly displays well drained calcareous sandy soils of the Methwold Association but bands of the deep permeable sandy and peaty soils of the Isleham 2 Association, the shallow well drained calcareous sandy and coarse loamy

soils of the Newmarket 1 Association and the deep well drained sandy soils of the Newport 4 Association all exist to the immediate north (SSEW 1983).

3.2 Archaeological and historical background

Prehistoric (c. 700,000 BC – AD 43)

3.2.1 Thetford is located on the Icknield Way, a prehistoric trackway ultimately running from Hunstanton in Norfolk to Lyme Regis in Dorset, later used by the Romans. The track way utilised open country on lighter, dry soils, and Thetford probably became an important site due to its strategic position close to where the Icknield Way branched with one route leading towards Norwich, and because it controlled access to fords. Three fords crossed the comparatively large river Little Ouse where it meets the river Thet (the Nuns Bridge ford is the oldest followed by the Town Bridge ford). Palaeolithic tools have been recovered from the river terraces and Neolithic and Bronze Age pits, flints or pottery have been found in the area, whilst the nationally important late Neolithic flint mines of Grimes Graves are located approximately 7 km away to the north-west. During the Iron Age a double ditched oval enclosure was built c. 500 BC between the two fords which dominated the crossings HER 5747 (TL 8742 8283).

Romano-British (AD 43 – 410)

3.2.2 The area has strong associations with Boudicca and Iceni silver coins have been found around Gallows Hill (A Scheduled Ancient Monument). In 1980, a complex of buildings were discovered by aerial photography on the summit of Gallows Hill (HER 5853; NGR TL 866 849). Excavation revealed a rectangular enclosure of 11 acres containing three large circular buildings and a D-shaped enclosure, from which was excavated a bronze oak leaf, and the site is interpreted as a religious centre. The site is multi-phased with three 1st century AD phases, and a 4th century AD phase. The first two phases were subject to careful demolition, while the third phase c. AD60 was destroyed, probably in the post-Boudiccan reprisals. Two important Romano-British metal hoards have been found on Gallows Hill. The 'Thetford hoard' included 33 spoons, some inscribed with dedications to a woodland god Faunus, 20 gold rings, and a gold buckle with a dancing satyr, which were dated by coins to after 388. It is suggested they were objects associated with a Bacchanalian drinking cult possibly secreted following the edict of 391 reinstating Christianity as state religion. The second hoard, found near the "palace" and known as the Thetford hoard, contained 47 silver coins also dated between AD 355 and 388.

Anglo-Saxon (AD 411 – 1065)

3.2.3 Early and middle Saxon settlement has been located in the vicinity of the later Red Castle in an area that was known as *Inselford* and included a church dedicated to St Lawrence which was rebuilt in 1030; 7th-8th century occupation has been found on the south side of town close to St Margaret's

cemetery and beside the Brandon Road. Thetford is first mentioned in the late 9th century as *Theodford* meaning 'peoples ford' at the time when the Saxon town developed. This included the introduction of pottery kilns producing distinctive wheel-made sandy grey vessels known as Thetford ware. Thetford's importance is indicated when it was plundered and burned twice by the invading Danes in 1004 and 1010. Two major battles were fought on those dates outside the town. The vast amount of known Anglo-Saxon occupation reaches a line approximately 700-800 metres north of the site. However, the nearest find spot, a late Saxon gilded bronze enamel disc from a brooch or casket (HER 299443; NGR TL 8584 8178) found during burial of a terrapin, is located approximately 50 metres from the site. Such stray finds from back gardens indicate the possibility of other Saxon occupation or activity outside the core of the town settlement. The town rose to prominence in the 10th century, becoming the fifth or sixth largest in England. It was the site of royal mints from the reign of Athelstan to Ethelred and the Bishop of East Anglia moved his seat there from North Elmham.

Medieval (AD 1066 – 1539)

3.2.4 The Normans reoccupied the Iron Age hillfort in Thetford turning it into a motte and bailey castle HER 5747 (NGR TL 8742 8283). A second fortification was built in the 11th century at Red Castle cutting across earlier Saxon defensive earthworks and other occupation evidence; it may derive its name from *Reed Ford* indicating the location of the third ford by the Icknield Way. The Cluniac Priory founded in 1103 is the most important of the religious houses in Thetford. The Barnham Cross located 1.2 km south-east of the site was set up in the medieval period to mark the border between the Liberty of Thetford and the Liberty of St Edmund in Bury. Thetford fell into decline later in the medieval period and never recovered its position of prominence. There are no medieval finds recorded within 500 metres of the site.

Post-medieval (AD 1540 – 1900)

3.2.5 The area lies on the outskirts of modern Thetford in an area that was developed between 1945 and 1970.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Foundation trenches for the residential units were opened using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under archaeological supervision. The trenches formed a large rectangle (9.50 x 16.00m), orientated N/S. The internal space was divided into four smaller units by three foundation trenches orientated E/W. Six sample sections were recorded; four around the perimeter of the rectangular enclosure and one within the middle cross trench. All exposed surfaces were examined for archaeological features. Deposits were recorded by means of *pro forma* recording sheets, drawn to scale and photographed as appropriate.

5 RESULTS Fig. 3

5.1 Site visit 07/07/09

The foundation trenches were observed. Five sample sections were recorded, each 1m in length. A small ditch was recorded along the eastern side of the perimeter trench.

Sample Section 1 West side, east facing 0.00m = 35.44m AOD		
0.00 – 0.30m	L1000	Modern made ground. Loose, medium yellow orange sand.
0.30 – 0.50m	L1001	Demolition layer. Modern building debris (bricks, breeze blocks, tile, tarmac) in a loose, medium brown grey silty sand.
0.50 – 0.80m	L1002	Subsoil. Loose, medium grey brown silty sand.
0.80m+	L1003	Natural geological deposit. Loose, light orange and yellow brown drift sands above firm, light yellow white chalk.

Additional description of deposits: The demolition layer, L1001, was present in the southern half of the sample section only and continued along the length of the foundation trench to Sample Section 3. The solid geology mostly comprised chalk. The overlying drift sands were isolated, and present in the south-west corner.

Sample Section 2 West side, east facing 0.00m = 35.54m AOD		
0.00 – 0.12m	L1000	Modern made ground. As above.
0.12 – 0.27m	L1002	Subsoil. As above.
0.27m+	L1003	Natural geological deposit. Firm, light yellow white chalk.

Sample Section 3 North side, south facing 0.00m = 35.46m AOD		
0.00 – 0.34m	L1000	Modern made ground. As above.
0.34 – 0.59m	L1001	Demolition layer. As above.
0.59 – 0.65m	L1002	Subsoil. As above.
0.65m+	L1003	Natural geological deposit. As above.

Sample Section 4 North side, south facing 0.00m = 35.52m AOD		
0.00 – 0.45m	L1000	Modern made ground. As above.
0.45m+	L1003	Natural geological deposit. As above.

Additional description of deposits: The made ground, L1000, in the middle of the site (Sample Section 4) was much thicker and has replaced all other deposits.

Sample Section 5 (DP 5) East side, west facing 0.00m = 35.38m AOD		
0.00 – 0.17m	L1000	Modern made ground. As above.
0.17 – 0.47m	L1002	Subsoil. As above.
0.47m+	L1003	Natural geological deposit. As above.

Description: A small ditch, F1004, was visible in the sample section and in the opposite section (DP 5).

Ditch F1004 (0.50+ x 0.55 x 0.33) was linear in plan with steep sides and a flattish base. Its fill, L1005, was a loose, medium grey brown silty sand with occasional charcoal and moderate small to medium stones. No finds were present.

5.2 Site visit 08/07/09

The excavation of the remaining foundation trenches was observed. A large 4.50m long section was recorded along the northern trench. A large quarry pit, F1006, was present.

Sample Section 6 (DPs 3 & 4) North side, south facing 0.00m = 35.56m AOD		
0.00 – 0.18m	L1000	Modern made ground. As above.
0.18m+	L1003	Natural geological deposit. As above.

Quarry Pit F1006 (4.28 x 0.50+ x 1.08m) extended beyond the limits of the foundation trench on both sides (DPs 3 & 4). It had irregular sides and an irregular base. Its fill, L1007, was a loose, medium brown orange sand with chalk and moderate large flint nodules. No finds were present.

6 CONFIDENCE RATING

6.1 It is not felt that any factors inhibited the recording of archaeological features and finds

7 DEPOSIT MODEL

7.1 The uppermost deposit comprised modern made ground, L1000, a loose medium yellow/orange sand. L1000 overlay a demolition layer, L1001, which comprised modern building debris in a loose medium brown silty sand.

L1001 in turn overlay Subsoil L1002, a loose medium grey brown silty sand. L1002 overlay the natural deposit, L1003, a loose light orange and yellow brown drift sand above firm, light yellow white chalk.

7.2 The made ground, L1000, in the middle of the site (Sample Section 4) was much thicker (0.45m) and had replaced all other deposits.

8 DISCUSSION

8.1 Thetford was a site of great importance in the prehistoric, Roman, Saxon and early medieval periods. The site lies outside the known extent of settlement of the Saxon and medieval towns, but occasional archaeological finds from back gardens, in particular the Late Saxon gilded bronze enamel metal work (HER 299443; NGR TL 8584 8178) indicated a potential for archaeological finds.

8.2 In the event an undated ditch (F1004) and an undated quarry pit (F1006) were recorded

ARCHIVE DEPOSITION

Archive records, with an inventory, will be quantified, ordered, indexed, cross-referenced and checked for internal consistency. The archive will be deposited with the Norfolk Museums Service.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

AS is grateful to Brooks & Wood Ltd for commissioning and funding the project.

AS would also like to acknowledge the input and advice of James Albone of Norfolk Landscape Archaeology.

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Institute of Field Archaeologists 1994 (revised 2001) *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-based Assessment*

Institute of Field Archaeologists 1994 (revised 1999) *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Evaluation*

SSEW 1983 *Soil Survey of England and Wales: Soils of South East England (sheet 4)*. Harpenden, Rothamsted Experimental Station/Lawes Agricultural Trust

SSEW 1983 *Soil Survey of England and Wales: Legend for the 1:250,000 Soil Map of England and Wales* Harpenden, Rothamsted Experimental Station/Lawes Agricultural Trust

Web Sites

Norfolk Historic Environment Record (heritage.norfolk.gov.uk)

APPENDIX 1 HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD DATA

The following sites are those that lie within a c. 750m radius of the assessment site. The table has been compiled from data held by the Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER). The locations of the sites are shown in Fig. 3. Their significance, where relevant, is discussed in Section 4.2.

HER No.	NGR TF	Description
Prehistoric (700,000 BC – AD 43)		
5756	TL 864 828	Flint scatters
32342	TL 842 815	Neolithic scraper
37325	TL 86098 80926	Prehistoric flints found at the Thetford bypass
5794	TL TL868 814	Prehistoric pot boiler and flints from a pit found in 1908. A Palaeolithic handaxe also recorded
2485	TL 8515 8206	Prehistoric flint implement
39670	TL 86344 824439	Neolithic scraper
33812	TL 854 828	Neolithic flint and Bronze Age pottery
5756	TL 864 828	Pottery including Beaker
5756	TL 864 828	Settlement: pits, post-holes, hearths
Roman (AD 43 – 410)		
5756	TL 864 828	Roundhouse, coins and bracelet
39670	TL 86344 824439	Roman coin and pot
5902	TL 8600 8248	Roman coins of Nero and Drusus
33812	TL 854 828	Roman pottery
Anglo-Saxon (AD 410-1066)		
5756	TL 864 828	Town occupation: SFB's, aisled building, kilns, boundary ditches, flint road, numerous small finds including brooches, Late Saxon inhumations
33812	TL 854 828	Early Saxon settlement excavated in 1998-2000; SFB's and other structures, pits post-holes and possible cemetery
29443	TL 8584 8178	Late Saxon gilded bronze enamel disc from a brooch or casket mount found c.1981 during the burial of a terrapin
50106	TL 8645 8229	Mid to Late Saxon horse harness mount found in 2006 during gardening
5860	TL 8640 8246	Early Saxon inhumation found c.1929 with head to south accompanied by shield boss and spear head
Medieval (AD 1066 – 1550)		
5756	TL 864 828	Farm buildings, hearths, corn drying kilns, wells, padlocks and lead weights; inhumations at Church of

		St John cemetery
39670	TL 86344 824439	Medieval and Saxon chalk extraction site Late Saxon-medieval enclosure, ditch and pit, metalworking debris
5908	TL 8635 8251	Site of St Margaret's Church and Leper Hospital. Pre-Conquest foundation gone by 1368
5902	TL 8600 8248	Medieval finger ring found on St Martin's estate
24862	TL 852 827	Saxon brooch and 13 th century buckle and long cross penny
Post-medieval (AD 1550-1900)		
16862	TL 8599 8209	Windmill south-east of Mill Farm marked on the 1836 1 st edition OS Map last worked in 1892
5902	TL 8600 8248	Royal farthing of Charles II
Undated		
5924	TL 8600 8270	Human remains found on waste ground at Canon's Walk
36806	TL 8420 8162	Area of banks and ditches

PHOTOGRAPHIC INDEX



1
General view of the site looking SE



2
General view of the site looking SW



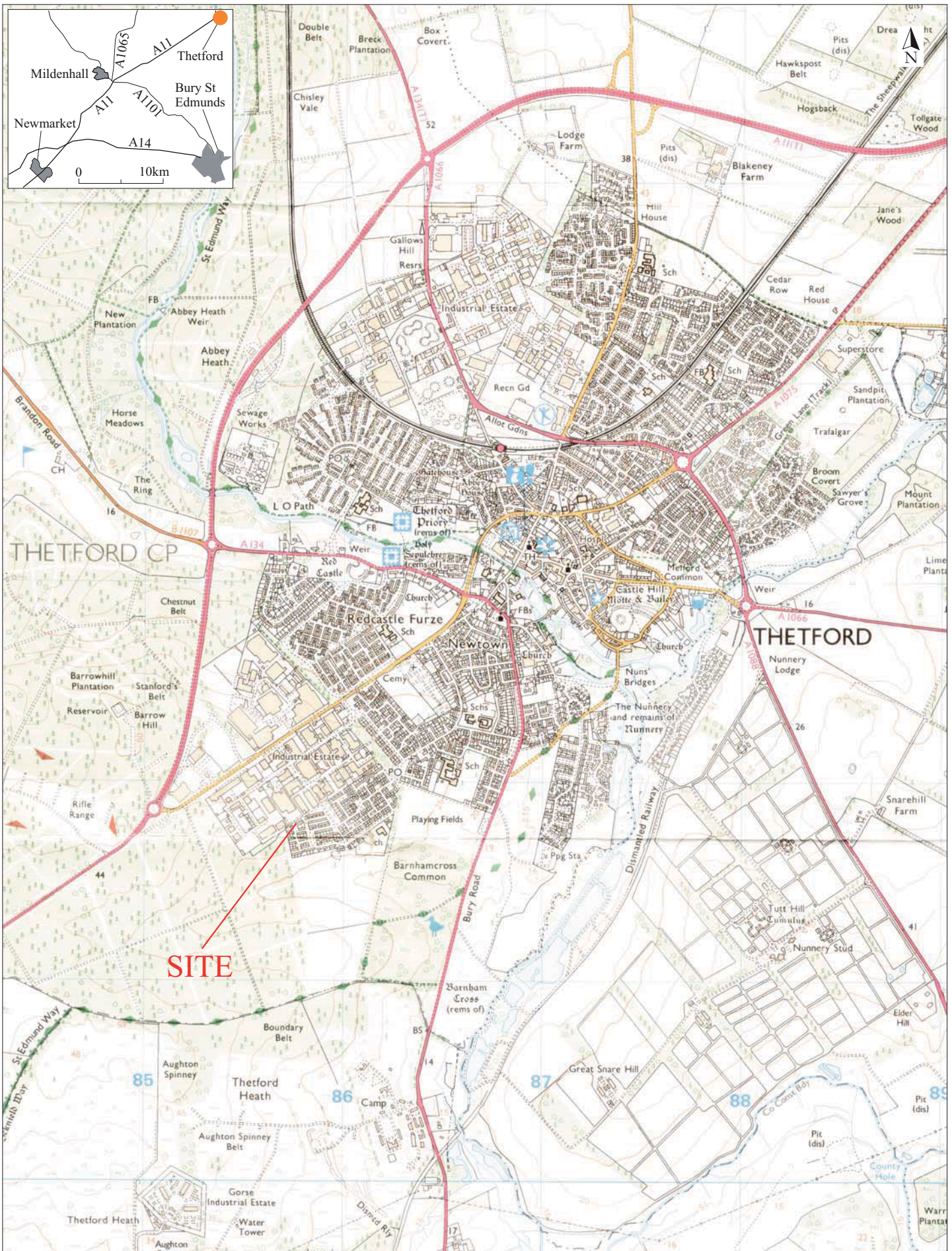
3
SW half of F1006, (SE facing)



4
NE half of F1006 (SE facing)

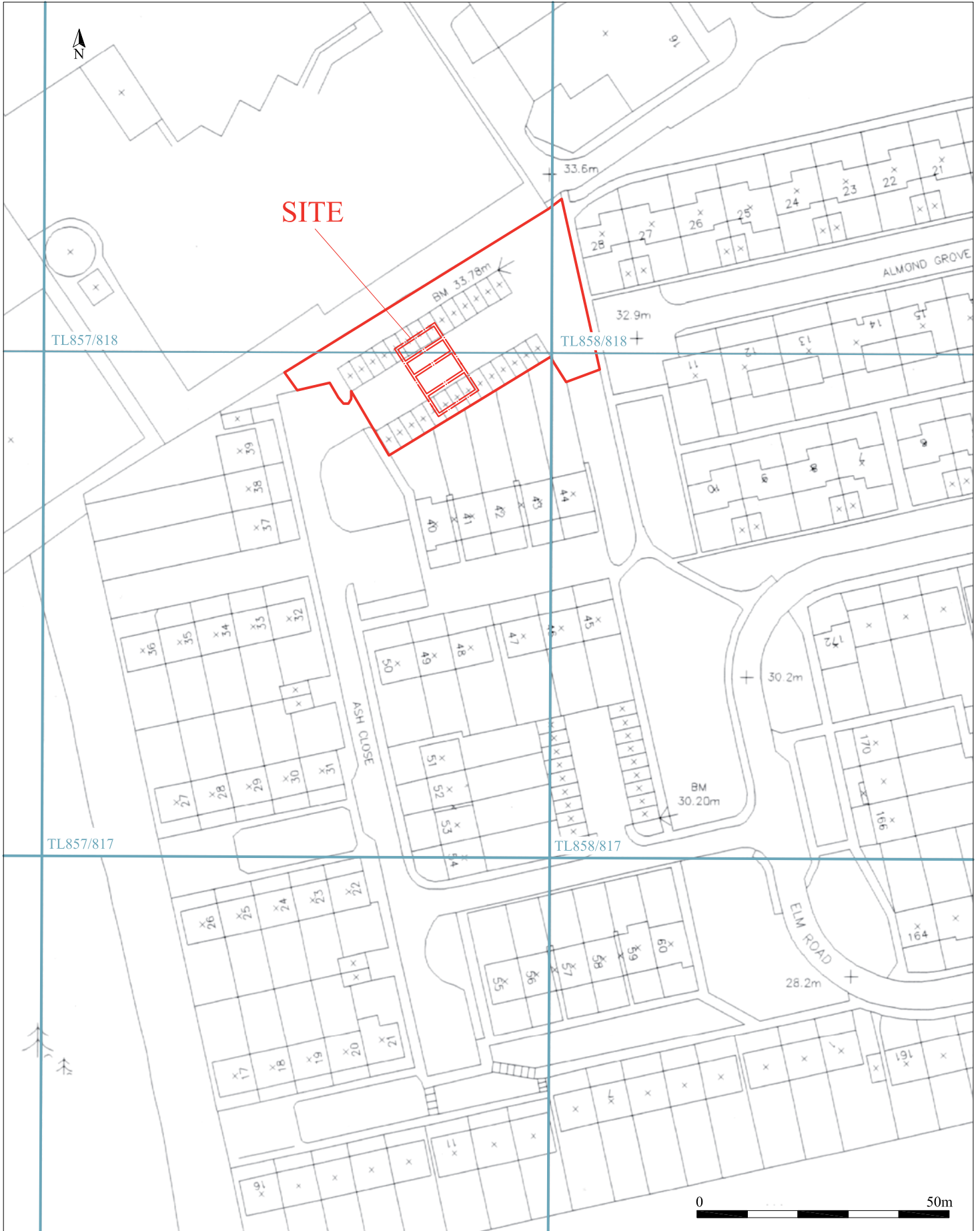


5
Sample section 5, F1004 (SE facing)



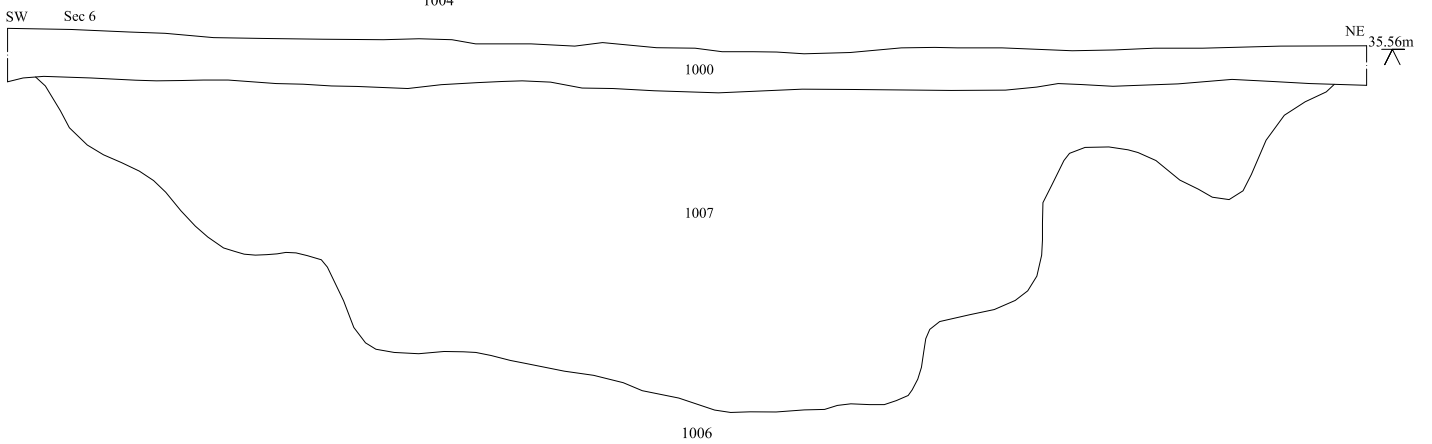
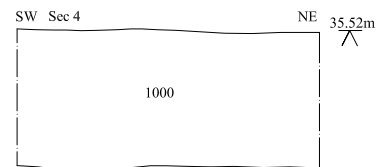
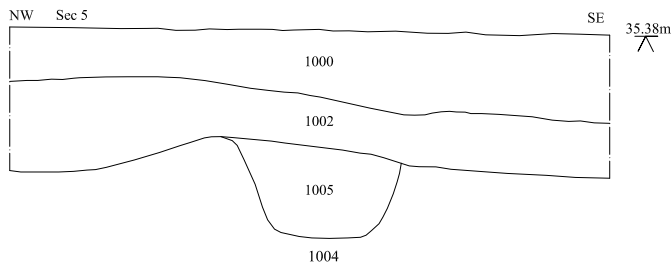
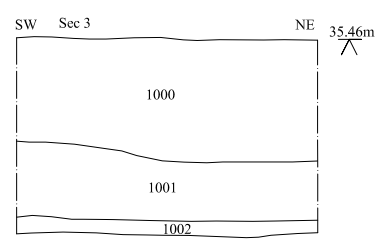
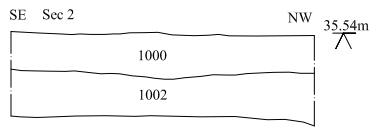
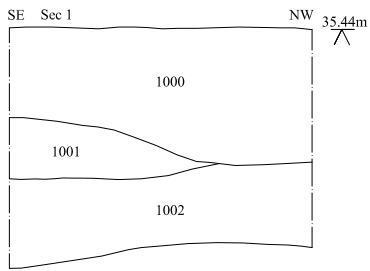
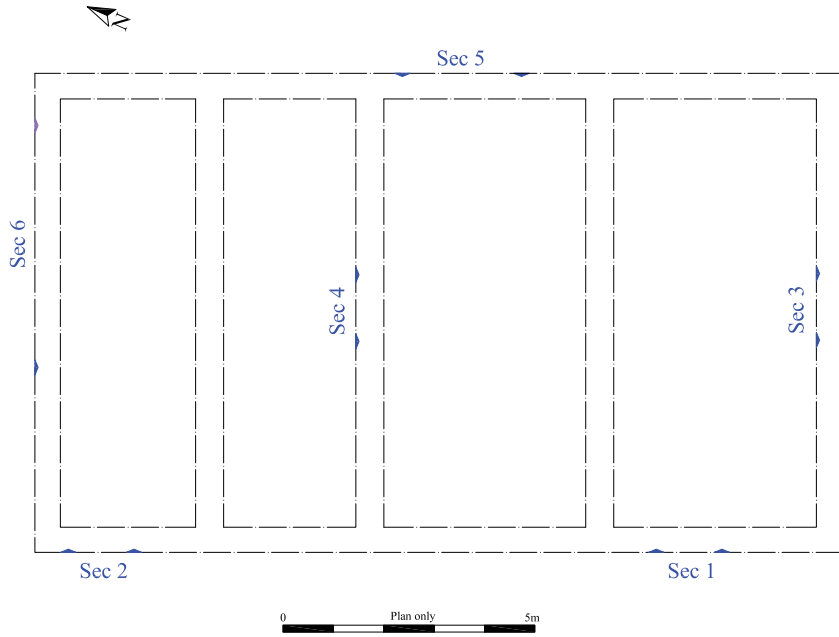
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Fig. 1 Site location plan
 Scale 1:25,000 at A4



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Fig. 2 Detailed site location plan
 Scale 1:1000 at A4



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Fig. 3 Plan & sections
 Scale Plan 1:150, sections 1:25 at A4