

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
OF A NEW WATER MAIN AT
SUSTEAD,
NORFOLK
(49111SVS)**

**Work Undertaken For
Anglia Water Services Limited**

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Report Compiled by
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National Grid Reference: TG 180 370 – TG 184 372
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ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT SERVICES



APS Report No. 9/07

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1. SUMMARY

A watching brief was undertaken during groundworks at Sustead, Norfolk. The watching brief monitored the stripping of topsoil prior to the excavation of a new water main.

The pipeline lies to the north of the medieval (AD 1066-1540) church of SS. Peter and Paul, which may have Late Saxon (AD 850-1066) origins. The route also traverses an area of earthworks, perhaps associated with a medieval manorial centre. To the south of the route is a cropmark complex that incorporated ring ditches of possible Bronze Age (2250-800 BC) date.

The watching brief revealed three ditches which remain undated. Two of the ditches are aligned on a still extant boundary and represent the former hedgeline. A third ditch survived as an earthwork feature until it was recently filled in. No artefacts were retrieved during the investigation.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Definition of a Watching Brief

An archaeological watching brief is defined as “*a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons. This will be within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed.*” (IFA 1999).

2.2 Planning Background

Archaeological Project Services was commissioned by Anglian Water Services Limited to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with a new water main between Bessingham and Metton, Norfolk. The

watching brief was carried out on the 18th and 19th January 2007.

2.3 Topography and Geology

Sustead is located 27km north of Norwich and 30km northeast of Dereham, Norfolk (Fig. 1).

The trench for the new water main was excavated between Bessingham and Metton, although only a short length in Sustead was monitored between National Grid References TG 180 370 and TG 184 372 immediately north of the parish church of SS. Peter and Paul (Fig. 2). The water main trench traverses a slight knoll at a height of c. 50m OD.

Local soils are of the Gresham Association, typically stagnogley soils, with Wick 2 Association brown earths to the south (Hodge *et al.* 1984). These soils are developed on a drift geology of glacial till which seals a solid geology of Pleistocene Norwich Crag (Chatwin 1968).

2.4 Archaeological Setting

Sustead is located in an area of known archaeology dating from the prehistoric period to the present day. Two possible Bronze Age ring ditches are known from aerial photographs from east of Sustead and a cropmark complex, including a ring ditch lies to the immediate south. Pottery of Romano-British date has also been identified to the east.

Sustead is first mentioned in the Domesday Survey of c. 1086. Referred to as *Surstede* and *Sutstede* the name is derived from the Old English and simply means southern place (Ekwall 1989, 453). The Domesday Survey records that William of Warenne and Roger Bigot held the land which contained meadow, arable land and at least one mill (Brown 1984).

SS. Peter and Paul’s church displays some characteristics of Late Saxon date (Pevsner

and Wilson 1998, 682). Comprising long and short quoin work in carstone blocks, these have been dismissed as not being Saxon in date (Taylor and Taylor 1980, 721). However, much of the church is considered 13th century and later.

The monitored section of the pipeline route lies close to a possible manorial complex comprising the earthworks of a moat and enclosures and possible building platforms.

3. AIMS

The aim of the archaeological investigation was to ensure that any archaeological features exposed during the groundworks should be recorded and, if present, to determine their date, function and origin.

4. METHODS

Prior to the excavation of the new water main trench, topsoil was stripped from a 20m wide easement along the length of the pipeline. The exposed surface was then examined for archaeological remains and selected deposits were excavated further to retrieve artefactual material and to determine their function. Each deposit was allocated a unique reference number (context number) with an individual written description. A list of all contexts and their descriptions appears as Appendix 1. A photographic record was compiled and plans were drawn at a scale of 1:50. Recording was undertaken according to standard Archaeological Project Services' practice.

Following excavation the records were checked and a stratigraphic matrix produced. Phasing was assigned based on the nature of the deposits and recognisable relationships between them.

5. RESULTS

Archaeological contexts are listed below and described. The numbers in brackets are the context numbers assigned in the field.

The earliest deposit encountered was a natural layer of reddish brown silty sand and gravel (002).

Located towards the southwest of the monitored area were two north-south aligned parallel ditches (Fig. 3). The first (003) was 6.6m long and 1.5m wide and contained a single fill of brown sandy silt with frequent flint (004).

The second ditch (005) was located 3.8m to the east and measured 9.5m long and 1.5m wide. This contained a fill of grey sandy silt with frequent flint (006).

Located north of the church was an east-west aligned ditch (007) that was 26m long by 2m wide (Plate 3). A fill of grey and brown silty clay was identified (008).

Sealing all deposits was the current topsoil comprising a 0.3m thick layer of greyish brown silty sand (001).

6. DISCUSSION

Natural deposits of silty sand and gravel represent the upper surface of the underlying drift geology of glacial till.

Three ditches were revealed during the investigation, though remain undated due to a lack of artefactual material. However, the two parallel ditches follow the current field boundary and are likely to have once bordered a hedgeline which is still evident to the north and south (Plate 2).

The third ditch survived as a slight earthwork until it was infilled approximately two years ago when the field reverted to arable farming (*pers.*

comm. landowner). The origin of the earthwork ditch is unknown.

No artefacts were retrieved during the investigation.

7. CONCLUSION

A watching brief was undertaken during groundworks for a new water main as the route traversed a possible medieval earthwork site and in close proximity to ring ditches of probable prehistoric origin.

However, three ditches were revealed during the investigation, of which two relate to a still extant boundary. The third ditch may have earlier origins and survived as an earthwork feature until recently.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Project Services wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Mrs J. Cayless of Anglia Water Services Limited for commissioning the fieldwork and post-excavation analysis. The work was coordinated by Gary Taylor who edited this report along with Tom Lane. Dave Start allowed access to the library maintained by Heritage Lincolnshire.

9. PERSONNEL

Project Coordinator: Gary Taylor
 Site Supervisor: Mary Nugent
 Photographic reproduction: Sue Unsworth
 Illustration: Paul Cope-Faulkner
 Post-excavation analysis: Paul Cope-Faulkner

10. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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11. ABBREVIATIONS

APS Archaeological Project Services
 IFA Institute of Field Archaeologists

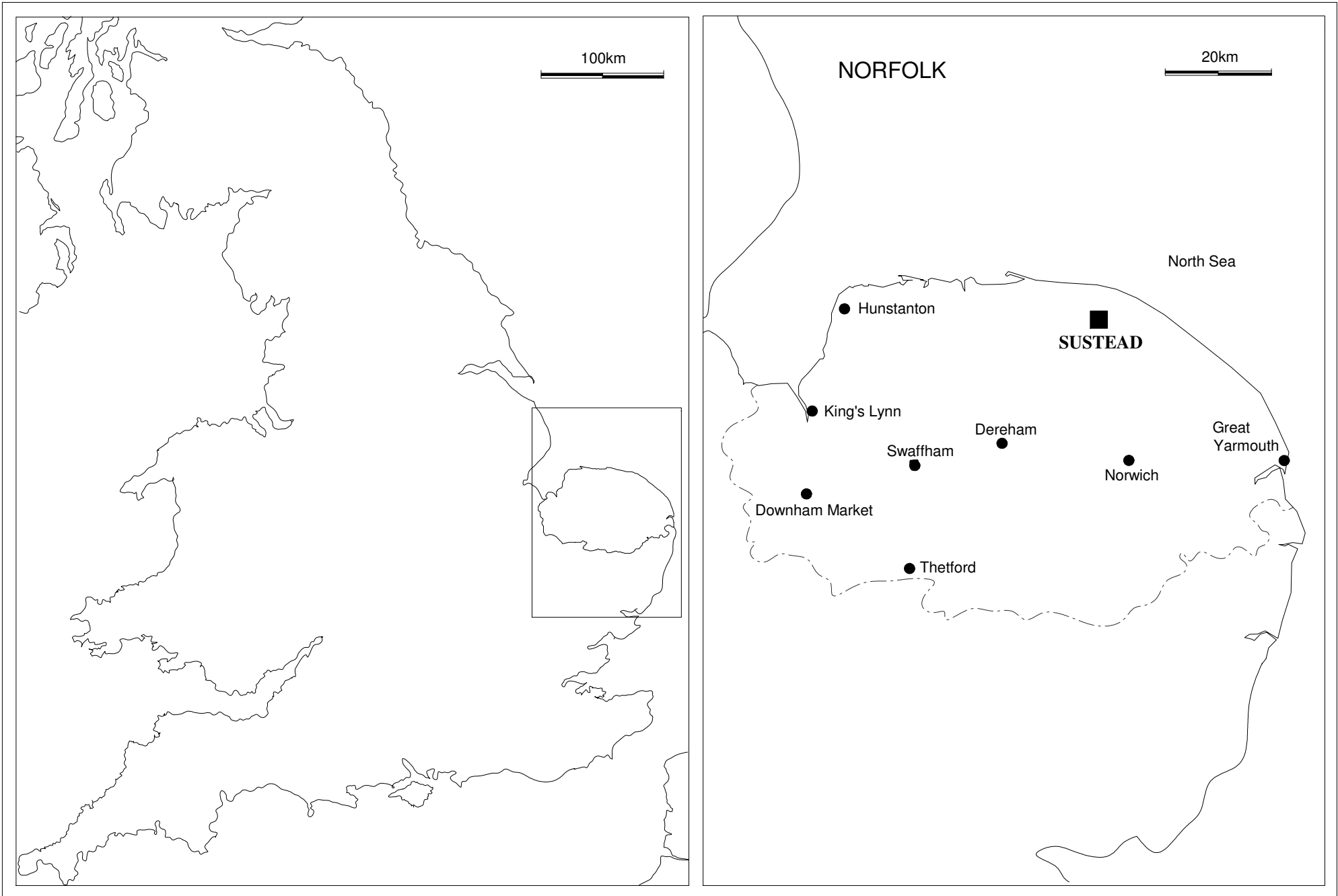
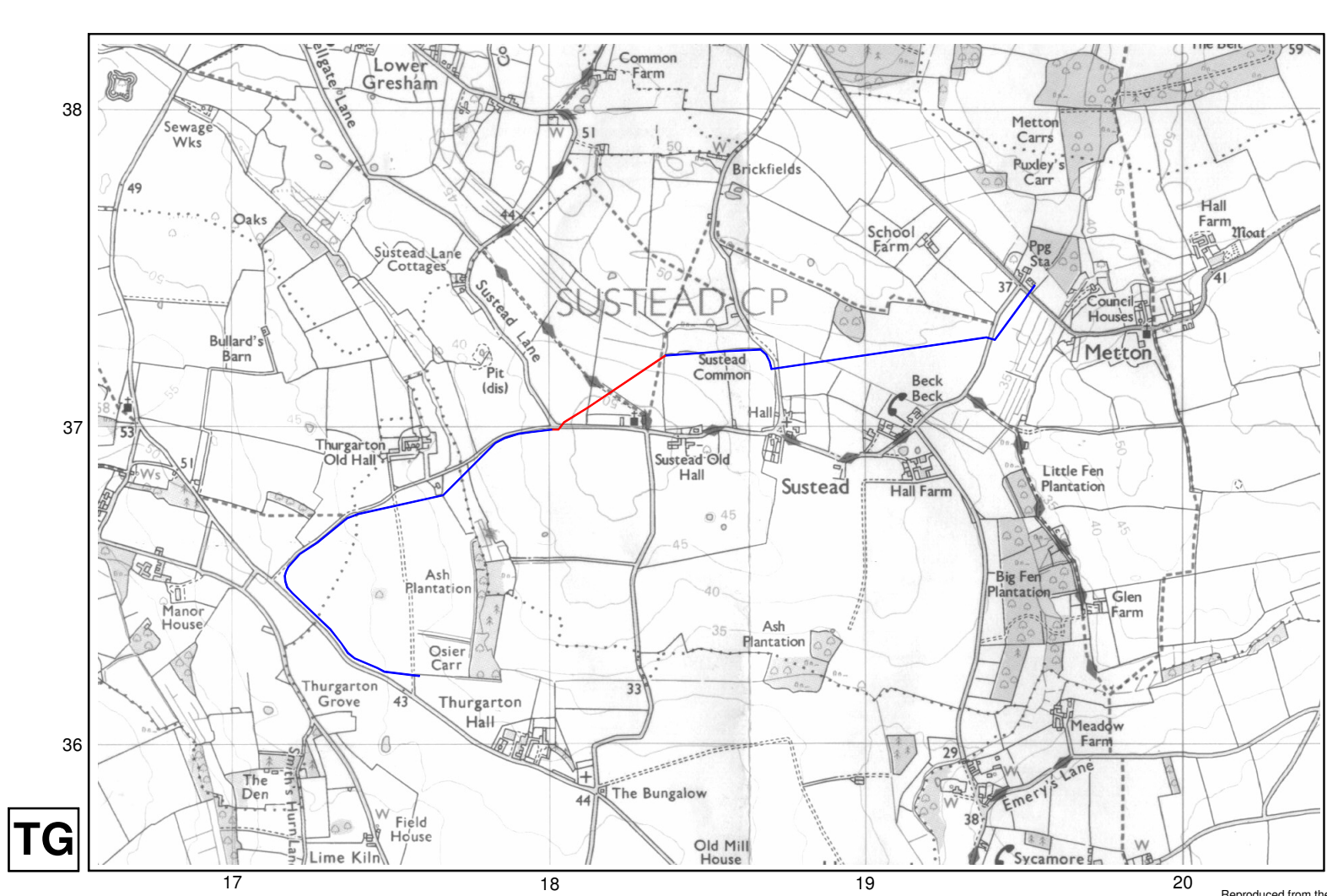




Figure 1 General Location Plan



TG

-  Pipeline route
-  Length subject to archaeological monitoring



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Project Name: Sustead Water Main 49111SVS		
Scale 1:20000	Drawn by: PCF	Report No: 9/07

Figure 2 - Site location plan

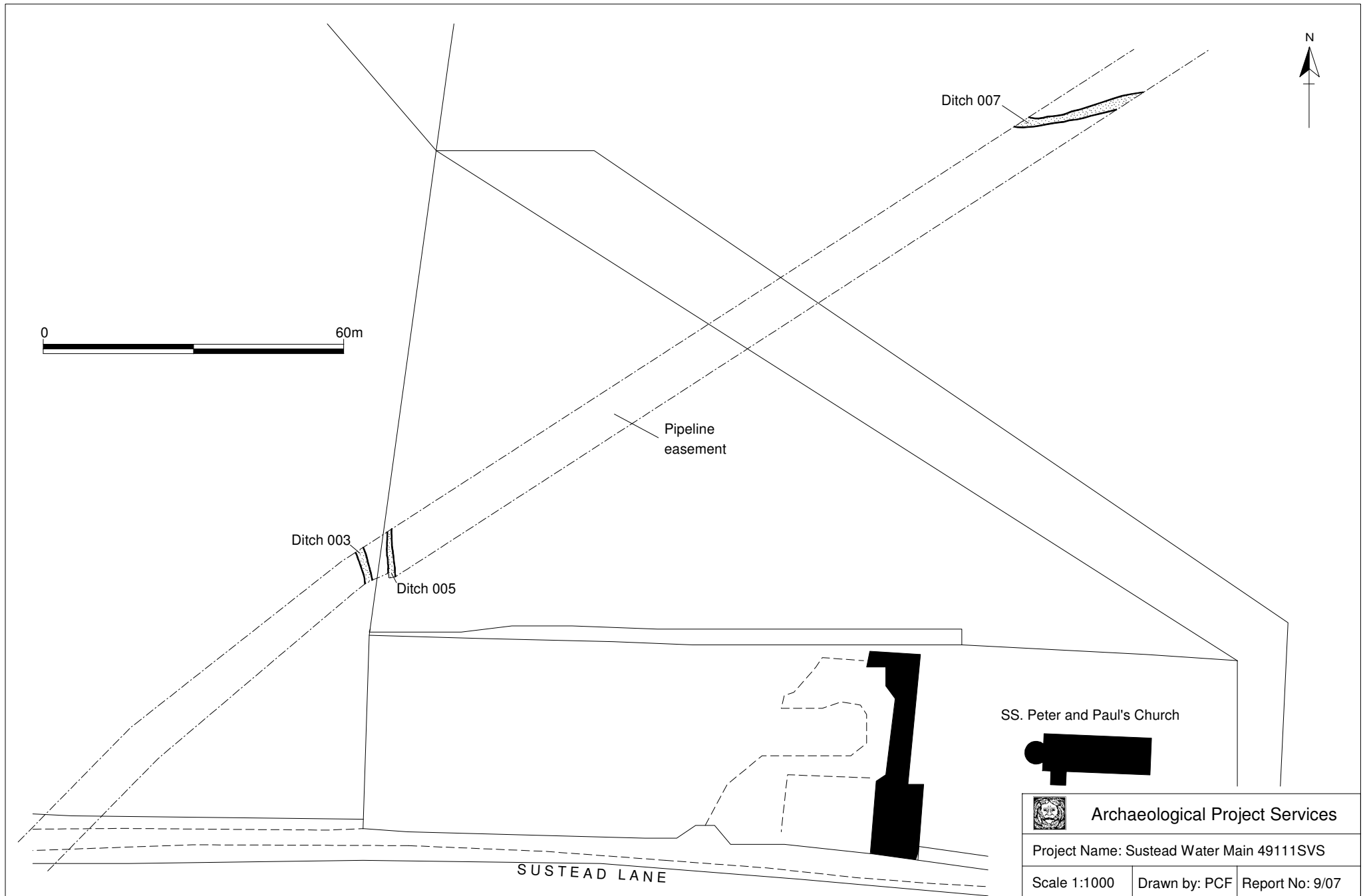


Figure 3 - Plan of the monitored area showing principal features



Plate 1 - View of SS. Peter and Paul's Church from the pipeline route, looking south



Plate 2 - View showing ditches (003) and (005) with hedgerow bank in the background, looking south



Plate 3 - Ditch (007), looking west

Appendix 1

CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

No.	Description	Interpretation
001	Firm mid greyish brown silty sand, 0.3m thick	Topsoil
002	Firm mid reddish brown silty sand and gravel	Natural deposit
003	Linear feature, aligned north-south, >6.6m long by 1.5m wide, not excavated	Ditch
004	Firm mid brown sandy silt with frequent flint	Fill of (003)
005	Linear feature, aligned north-south, >9.5m long by 1.5m wide, not excavated	Ditch
006	Firm mid grey sandy silt with frequent flint	Fill of (005)
007	Linear feature, aligned east-west, >26m long by 2m wide, not excavated	Ditch
008	Soft mixed mid grey and mid brown silty clay	Fill of (007)

Appendix 2

GLOSSARY

Bronze Age	A period characterised by the introduction of bronze into the country for tools, between 2250 and 800 BC.
Context	An archaeological context represents a distinct archaeological event or process. For example, the action of digging a pit creates a context (the cut) as does the process of its subsequent backfill (the fill). Each context encountered during an archaeological investigation is allocated a unique number by the archaeologist and a record sheet detailing the description and interpretations of the context (the context sheet) is created and placed in the site archive. Context numbers are identified within the report text by brackets, <i>e.g.</i> (004).
Cropmark	A mark that is produced by the effect of underlying archaeological features influencing the growth of a particular crop.
Cut	A cut refers to the physical action of digging a posthole, pit, ditch, foundation trench, <i>etc.</i> Once the fills of these features are removed during an archaeological investigation the original 'cut' is therefore exposed and subsequently recorded.
Fill	Once a feature has been dug it begins to silt up (either slowly or rapidly) or it can be back-filled manually. The soil(s) which become contained by the 'cut' are referred to as its fill(s).
Layer	A layer is a term to describe an accumulation of soil or other material that is not contained within a cut.
Medieval	The Middle Ages, dating from approximately AD 1066-1500.
Natural	Undisturbed deposit(s) of soil or rock which have accumulated without the influence of human activity.
Prehistoric	The period of human history prior to the introduction of writing. In Britain the prehistoric period lasts from the first evidence of human occupation about 500,000 BC, until the Roman invasion in the middle of the 1 st century AD.
Romano-British	Pertaining to the period dating from AD 43-410 when the Romans occupied Britain.
Saxon	Pertaining to the period dating from AD 410-1066 when England was largely settled by tribes from northern Germany.
Till	A deposit formed after the retreat of a glacier. Also known as boulder clay, this material is generally unsorted and can comprise of rock flour to boulders to rocks of quite substantial size.

Appendix 3

THE ARCHIVE

The archive consists of:

8	Context records
2	Plan sheets
1	Photographic record sheet
1	Stratigraphic matrix

All primary records are currently kept at:

Archaeological Project Services
The Old School
Cameron Street
Heckington
Sleaford
Lincolnshire
NG34 9RW

The ultimate destination of the project archive is:

Norfolk Museums Service
Union House
Gressenhall
Dereham
Norfolk
NR20 4DR

The archive will be deposited in accordance with the document titled *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England*.

Archaeological Project Services Site Code:

49111SVS

The discussion and comments provided in this report are based on the archaeology revealed during the site investigations. Other archaeological finds and features may exist on the development site but away from the areas exposed during the course of this fieldwork. *Archaeological Project Services* cannot confirm that those areas unexposed are free from archaeology nor that any archaeology present there is of a similar character to that revealed during the current investigation.

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