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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF  
OF FOUNDATION TRENCHES AT  
NEW ROAD,  
SHIPDHAM,  
NORFOLK**

ENF125536

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**Work Undertaken For  
Ian J M Cable**

February 2011

Report Compiled by  
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A.P.S. Report No. 1/11

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
PROJECT  
SERVICES**





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## 1. SUMMARY

*A watching brief undertaken during groundworks at New Road, Shipdham, Norfolk monitored the excavation of foundation trenches for a single dwelling*

*The development site lies immediately to the north of the Grade-I listed, All Saints Church, which is chiefly medieval in date. The graveyard of the church is adjacent to the proposed site.*

*Other medieval artefacts have been found throughout the village and the surrounding area and evidence for Prehistoric and Saxon settlement has been excavated to the south of the development area.*

*The watching brief revealed a sequence of undated and natural deposits as well as a wide pit cut possibly relating to quarrying activity. No finds were retrieved from either the deposits or the fill of the pit during the course of the watching brief.*

## 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 maybe disturbed or destroyed.*” (IfA 2008).

### 2.2 Planning Background

Archaeological Project Services was commissioned by Ian J M Cable to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with foundation trenching works at New Road, Shipdham, Norfolk. Approval for the

development of a single dwelling within a vacant plot was sought through the submission of planning application 2007/1553. The watching brief was carried out on the 8<sup>th</sup> December 2010.

### 2.3 Topography and Geology

Shipdham lies along the A1075 and is situated approximately 8km southwest of East Dereham and 33km west of Norwich in the administrative district of Breckland, Norfolk (Fig. 1).

The site lies to the north of the geographical centre of the village on the north side of New Road near to its junction with Church Lane at National Grid Reference TF 9581 0740(Fig. 2).

Local soils are fine loamy over clayey soils of the Beccles 1 Association developed on chalky till (Hodge *et al.* 1984, 117).

### 2.4 Archaeological Setting

The presence of Prehistoric to Saxon activity within the area is attested to through finds made during excavations to the south of the development site.

An archaeological evaluation, followed by further excavation work, was undertaken on land off Church Close. A spread of burnt and heat-shattered flint represents Prehistoric activity. Several worked flints and a number of flakes were also recovered from the excavation. The Roman period is represented by a small number of finds, including five coins and pot sherds.

The Saxon period is more extensively attested to with two Middle Saxon structures and a possible Late Saxon sunken-featured building having been excavated at Church Close. A large quantity of medieval pottery was

recovered from pits and ditches across the site (Ames 2006; Ames and Phelps 2008).

The village is noted in the Domesday Book of 1086 as ‘Scipdham’ or ‘Scipedeham’. The name is thought to have meant the village or homestead ‘with a sheep-cote or flock of sheep’ (Ekwall 1960, 418).

All Saints Church, at the centre of the village, is of medieval origin dating mainly to the 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. The church is Grade-I listed and has an adjacent graveyard. The development site lies immediately to the north of the graveyard. There are several other findspots of medieval artefacts in the village, items such as a horse harness pendant, buckles, buttons and jettons have all been recorded as metal detecting finds.

There are several listed buildings, mostly post-medieval in date, throughout the village of Shipdham and the historic core of the village comprises of a number of Grade-II listed buildings.

### 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

Trenches for the foundations were excavated by machine using a toothed bucket. 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 sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. Recording was undertaken according to standard Archaeological Project Services’ practice.

No finds were recovered.

### 5. RESULTS

Only a single feature was observed during the intrusive groundworks. It was present only in the exposed trench section and was presumed to be the cut and subsequent backfilling of a pit used for quarrying materials. None of the deposits, natural or otherwise, were dateable so the deposits and the pit cut and fill remain undated.

The earliest deposits recorded were a natural flint and sand deposit, with a high frequency of sub-rounded flint, **006**, in the eastern evaluation trenches and a mid greyish brown silty sand, **009**, in the western area of the trenches. It is possible that if **006** is undulating and sloping down to the west that the trenches to the west are not excavated to a sufficient depth to expose it, or it may be a variation in the natural.

Within the eastern section of the trenches **006** is overlain by a series of deposits. **005**, a mid greyish brown silty-sand, possibly similar to **009** lies directly above, followed by **004** a mixed deposit of brown and orange sand with a high frequency of sub-rounded flint. This is overlain by **003**, a dark brownish grey sand, with occasional charcoal inclusions, followed by subsoil, **002**, and topsoil, **001** (Fig. 4).

Elsewhere both **009** and **006** are overlain by a mid-brown silty sand **010**, up to 0.7m in thickness, which is in turn overlain by the subsoil, **002**, and topsoil, **001** (Fig. 5).

The topsoil, **001**, and the subsoil, **002**, were extant across the foundation trenches.

The possible pit cut, **[007]**, measured approximately 3m in width and extended the width of the foundation trench, continuing into the unexcavated areas to the north and south (Fig. 5). It is possible that this was a cut made for quarrying of

the natural deposits. The natural deposits observed in these trenches had a high frequency of sub-rounded and sub-angular flint cobbles, which is used locally as a building or decorative material, including in the pre-existing boundary wall of the plot.

The archaeological contexts are listed and described below (see Appendix 1).

## 6. CONCLUSION

Archaeological investigations were undertaken at New Road, Shipdham as the site lay close to the churchyard of All Saints Church and other sites of activity of various dates.

A sequence of subsoil and natural deposits was observed. A single pit and its associated fill were recorded in one of the trench sections.

No finds were recovered and therefore all deposits remain undated.

## 7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Archaeological Project Services wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Ian J M Cable, who commissioned the work. The project was co-ordinated by Gary Taylor; the report was edited by Dale Trimble and Tom Lane.

## 8. PERSONNEL

Project Coordinator: Gary Taylor  
 Site Supervisors: Chris Moulis  
 Illustration: Liz Murray  
 Post-excavation analysis: Liz Murray

## 9. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Hodge, CAH, Burton, RGO, Corbett, WM, Evans, R, and Seale, RS, 1984 *Soils and their use in Eastern England*, Soil Survey of England and Wales **13**

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## 10. ABBREVIATIONS

APS Archaeological Project Services

IFA Institute of Field Archaeologists

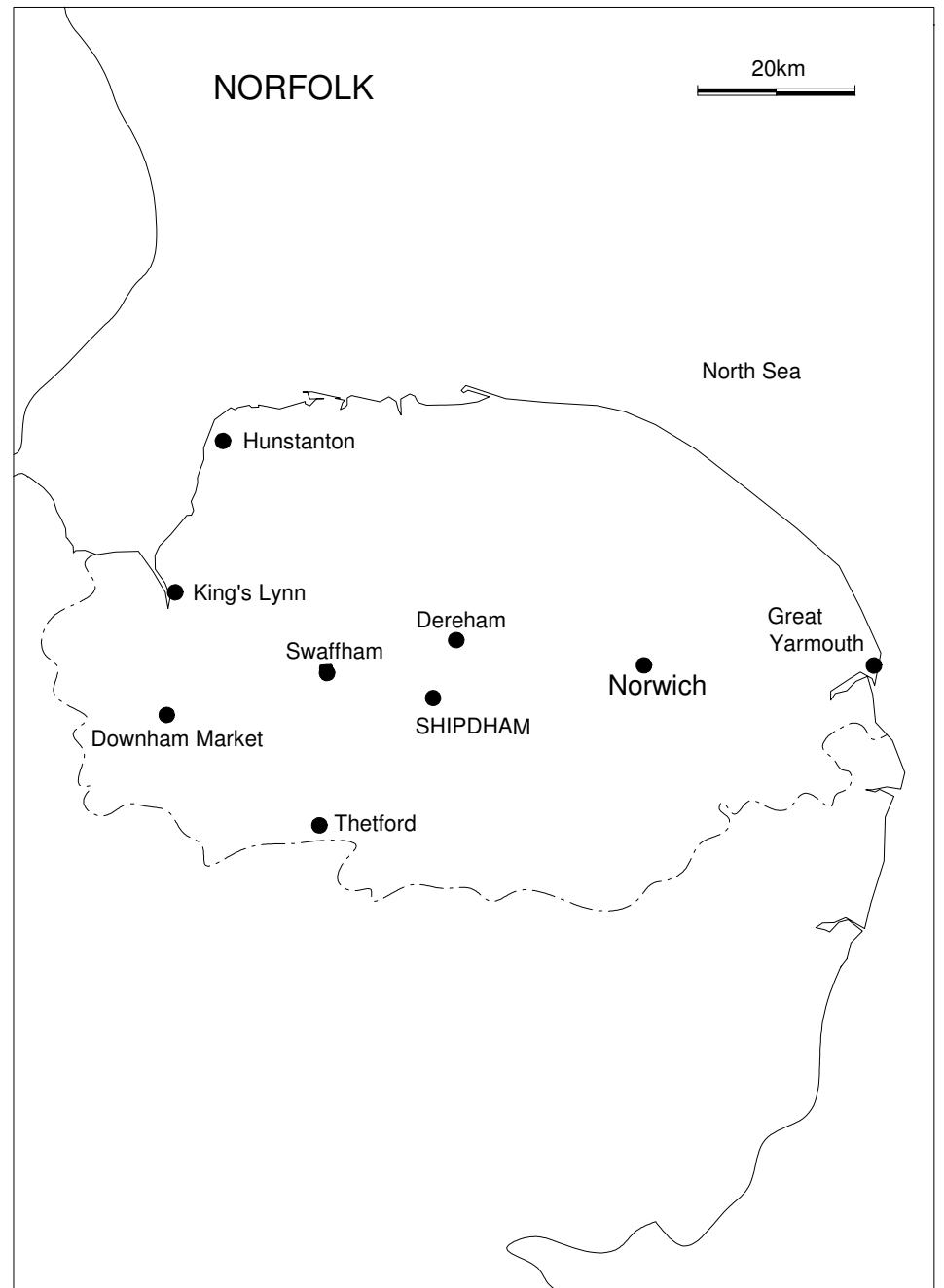


Figure 1 General Location Plan



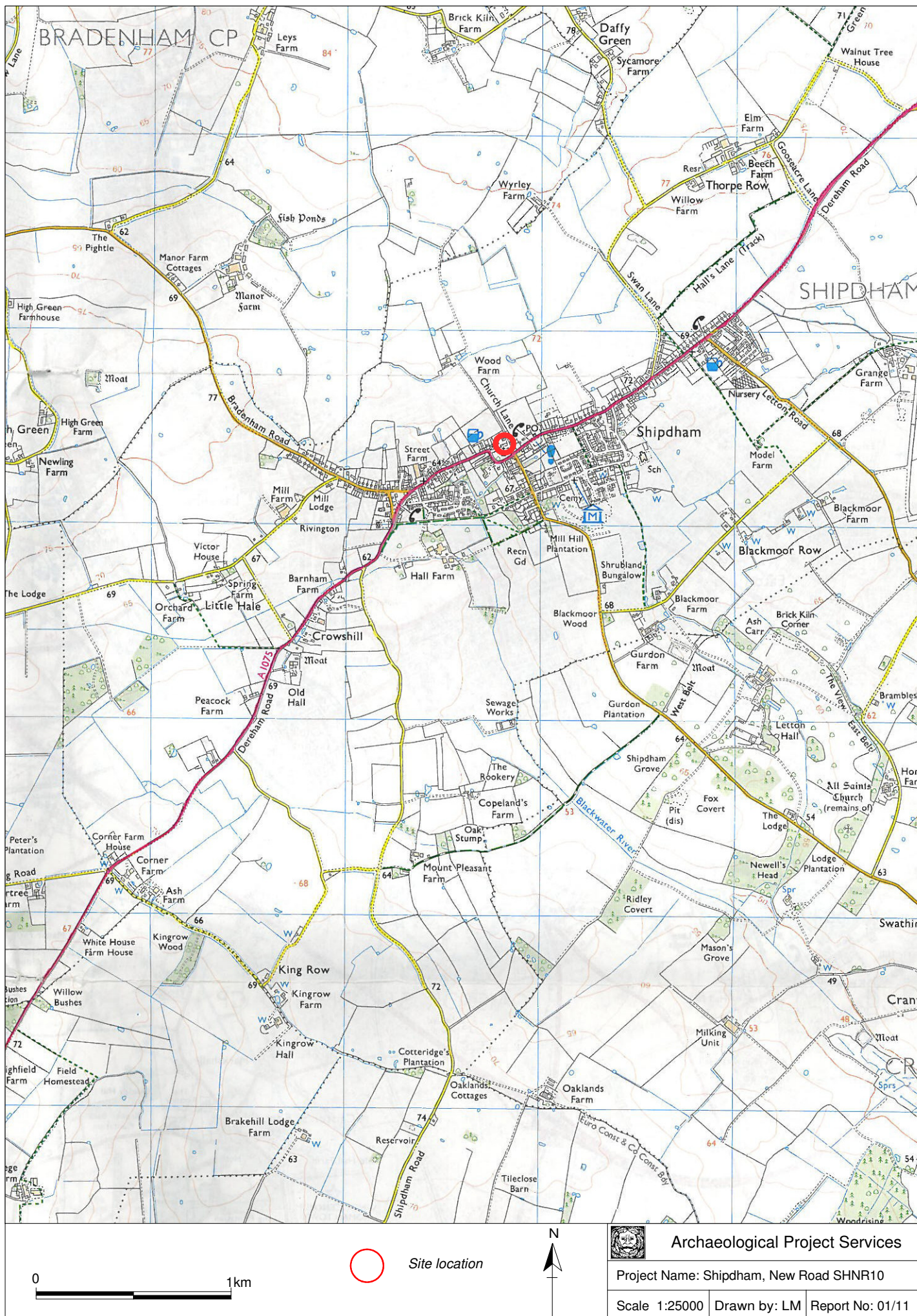
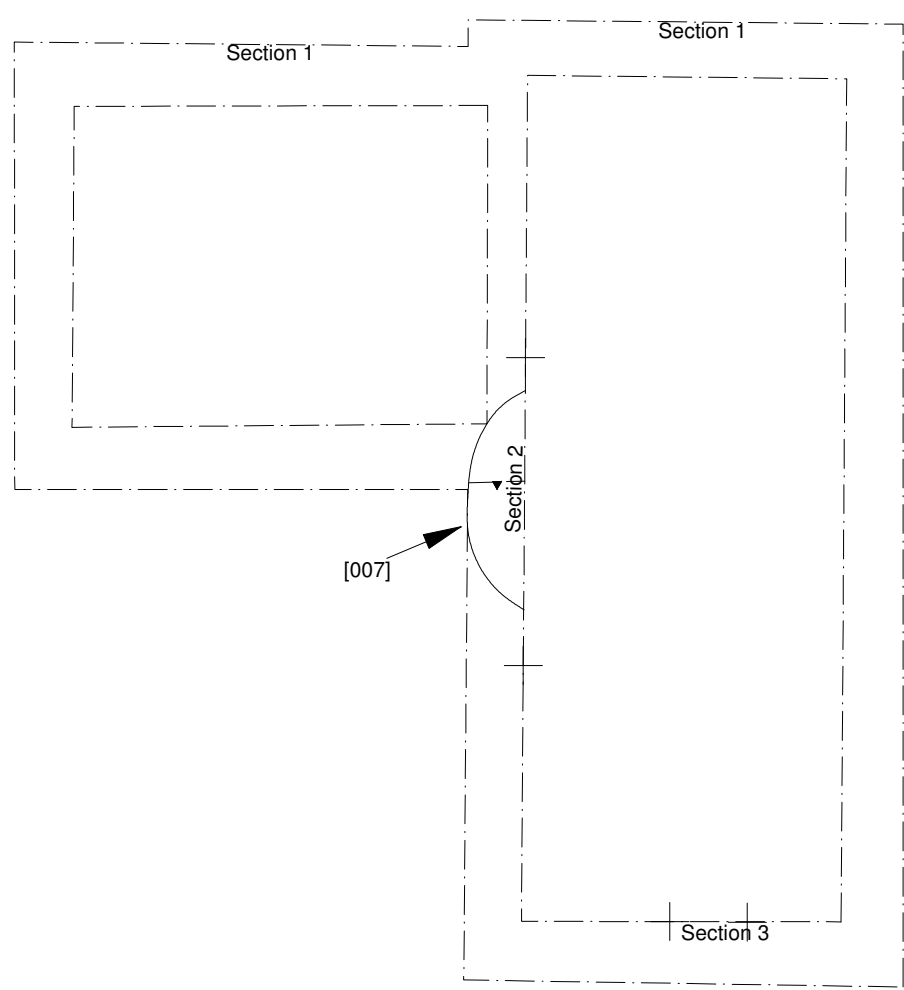
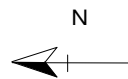


Figure 2: Site location plan





Plan of foundation trenches




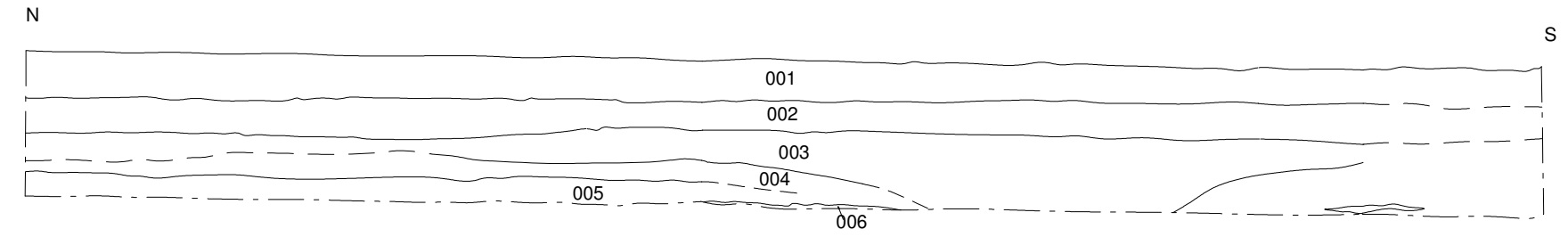
	Archaeological Project Services	
Project Name: Shipdham, New Road (SHNR10)		
Scale 1:100	Drawn by: LM	Report No: 1/11

Figure 3: Plan of foundation trenches



Section 1




 <b>Archaeological Project Services</b>		
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Scale 1:50	Drawn by: LM	Report No: 1/11

Figure 4: Section 1

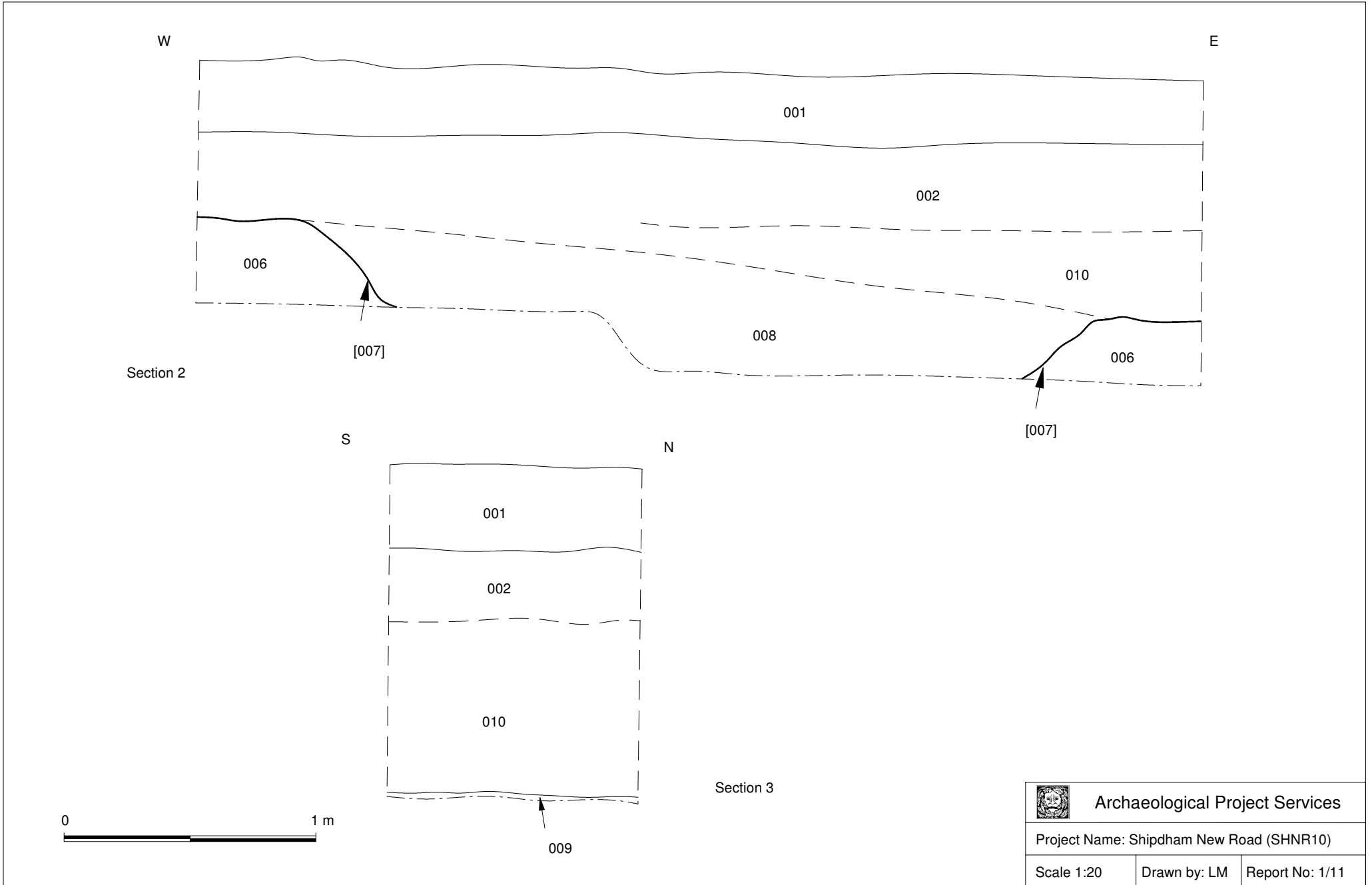


Figure 5: Sections 2 and 3

## Appendix 1

### CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

No.	Description	Interpretation
001	Dark greyish brown silty sand, 0.3m thick	Topsoil
002	Medium olive brown silty sand, 0.3m thick	Subsoil
003	Dark olive brown/grey silty sand, depth varies, up to 0.6m thick	Layer
004	Olive brown and patches of light orange sand, major constituent is small sub-rounded flint	Layer
005	Medium greyish brown silty sand, variation in natural	Layer
006	Natural flint/sand deposit	Layer
007	Pit cut	Cut
008	Mid olive brown silty sand	Fill of 007
009	Mid greyish brown silty sand	Interface between natural and subsoil
010	Medium brown silty sand	Layer

## Appendix 2

### GLOSSARY

<b>Bronze Age</b>	A period characterised by the introduction of bronze into the country for tools, between 2250 and 800 BC.
<b>Context</b>	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 interpretation 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].
<b>Cut</b>	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.
<b>Domesday Survey</b>	A survey of property ownership in England compiled on the instruction of William I for taxation purposes in 1086 AD.
<b>Fill</b>	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) that become contained by the 'cut' are referred to as its fill(s).
<b>Medieval</b>	The Middle Ages, dating from approximately AD 1066-1500.
<b>Natural</b>	Undisturbed deposit(s) of soil or rock which have accumulated without the influence of human activity
<b>Post-medieval</b>	The period following the Middle Ages, dating from approximately AD 1500-1800.
<b>Prehistoric</b>	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 1st century AD.
<b>Saxon</b>	Pertaining to the period dating from AD 410-1066 when England was largely settled by tribes from northern Germany, Denmark and adjacent areas.

## Appendix 3

### THE ARCHIVE

The archive consists of:

10	Context sheets
1	Photographic record sheet
1	Section record sheet
1	Plan record sheet
1	Daily record sheets
3	Sheets of scale drawings
0	Bag of finds

All primary records and finds 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 *County Standards for Field Archaeology in Norfolk*, produced by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology.

Norfolk Museums Service Number: ENF 125536

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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