

New Running Track RAF Lakenheath/Eriswell Suffolk

Archaeological Watching Brief



for
Keir

on behalf of
Defence Infrastructure
Organisation

CA Project: SU0077
CA Report: SU0077_1

September 2020



New Running Track RAF Lakenheath/Eriswell Suffolk

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CONTENTS

SUMMARY	2
1. INTRODUCTION.....	3
2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND.....	4
3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES.....	4
4. METHODOLOGY	4
5. RESULTS (FIGS 2-6).....	6
6. THE FINDS	10
7. THE BIOLOGICAL EVIDENCE	10
8. DISCUSSION.....	10
9. CA PROJECT TEAM.....	11
10. REFERENCES.....	11
APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS.....	12
APPENDIX B: HEAT ALTERED FINIT	13
APPENDIX C: THE PLANT MACROFOSSIL EVIDENCE	14
APPENDIX D: OASIS REPORT FORM	15

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- Fig. 1 Site location plan (1:25,000)
- Fig. 2 Trench plan showing excavated features and previous archaeological works (1:2500).
- Fig. 3 Main Strip, plan (1:250)
- Fig. 4 North-west soakaway, plan (1:100)
- Fig. 5 North-east soakaway, plan (1:100)
- Fig. 6 Sections. (1:20)

LIST OF PLATES

- Plate. 1 Pit 2000, looking north-east, 1m scale.
- Plate. 2 Pit 2002, looking north-west, 0.4m scale.
- Plate. 3 Pit 2004, looking north-west, 0.4m scale.
- Plate. 4 Pit 2006, looking north-east, 1m scale.
- Plate. 5 Pit 2008, looking north, 1m scale.
- Plate. 6 Posthole 2011, looking north-east, 0.3m scale.
- Plate. 7 Posthole 2014, looking north-east, 0.3m scale.

SUMMARY

Project Name: New Running Track
Location: RAF Lakenheath, Suffolk
NGR: 573130 280080
Type: Watching Brief
Date: 13th, 15th and 20th January 2020, 26th May and 24th July 2020 and 3rd and 9th September 2020.
Oasis: cotswold2-403688
Location of Archive: To be deposited with SCCAS
Site Code: ERL 213

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology during groundworks associated with the construction of a new running track at RAF Lakenheath. Parts of the development area had been subject to archaeological excavation between 2011 and 2012 uncovering Iron Age settlement and the aim of this current work was to record any archaeological deposits within areas that had not been accessible during the earlier investigations.

An initial three visits were conducted in January 2020 to the southern part of the site where excavations to level the site exposed the archaeological horizon. Most of the site was truncated by previous development and service trenches but four undated pits were identified. No archaeological artefacts were recovered during these works.

A further two visits were conducted in May and July 2020 to monitor the excavation of the soakaways at the northern edge of the site. A single pit was recorded within the north-eastern area which was undated but contained heat-altered flint and two postholes were identified within the north-western soakaway.

Two final visits were conducted in September 2020 to monitor a service trench to the north of Bedford road, which was completely disturbed by modern made ground.

The results of the work have been added to the overall archaeological plan of this area and have served to confirm the earlier excavation results and to allow confident interpretation of the form and date of the Iron Age settlement.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Between January and September 2020 Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological watching brief for Keir Construction on the behalf of the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) at RAF Lakenheath (centred at NGR: 573130 280080; Fig. 1). The watching brief was undertaken to fulfil a condition attached to a planning consent for the construction of a new running track and associated services at RAF Lakenheath, Suffolk.

1.2 The watching brief was carried out in accordance with the *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) produced by Jo Caruth (2019) and approved by Faye Minter of Suffolk County Council Archaeological service (SCCAS) and advisor to the LPA. The fieldwork also followed *Standard and guidance: Archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2014).

The site

1.3 The site is located within the perimeter of RAF Lakenheath, which extends across the parishes of Eriswell, Lakenheath and Wangford. The site sits towards the central-eastern area of the base (Fig. 2) and lies at approximately 13m AOD with a slight rise to 14m AOD at the southern end of the area due to former levelling and modern disturbance.

1.4 In order to level the site for the running track, up to c.1m of material was removed across the southern edge; the northern end was stripped of topsoil then built up with a maximum of 1m of material removed from the southern end. Approximately 0.3m of material was stripped from the central area.

1.5 The site covers 2.35ha and sits in the north-eastern part of Windsor Circle, a former residential area which was cleared in 2012-2013.

1.6 The underlying bedrock geology of the area is cretaceous chalk with overlying cover sand (BGS 2020). The chalk outcrops to the surface over some of this site.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 RAF Lakenheath has been subject to more than 300 archaeological interventions since the introduction of the Planning Policy Guidance 16 (Now National Planning Policy Framework) in 1990. An archaeological evaluation and excavation was carried out on parts of this site in 2011-2012 (Craven, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, Beverton, 2013), identifying an Iron Age settlement enclosure and field systems, a Bronze Age Cremation burial and undated ditch systems. Further settlement and funerary occupation dating to the Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman and Saxon Periods have been identified on adjacent sites (e.g. ERL 089, ERL 154, ERL 114, ERL 147, ERL 148, ERL 203).

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 The objectives of the archaeological works were:

- to monitor groundworks, and to identify, investigate and record all significant buried archaeological deposits revealed on the site during the course of the development groundworks;
- a specific aim in this case was to recover any additional information from the periphery of the previously excavated areas and to integrate these with the ongoing archaeological plan.
- at the conclusion of the project, to produce an integrated archive for the project work and a report setting out the results of the project and the archaeological conclusions that can be drawn from the recorded data.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 The fieldwork followed the methodology set out within the WSI (CA 2019). An archaeologist was present during intrusive groundworks comprising ground levelling, excavation for soakaways, footings and services (Fig. 2). No monitoring was undertaken within the areas previously the subject of full archaeological excavation.

- 4.2 Where archaeological deposits were encountered written, graphic and photographic records were compiled in accordance with CA Technical Manual 1: *Fieldwork Recording Manual*.
- 4.3 The site was recorded under the Suffolk HER code ERL 213 used for the previous excavations and context numbers issued from 2000 onwards.
- 4.4 The archive and artefacts from the watching brief are currently held by CA at their offices in Needham Market. Subject to the agreement of the legal landowner the artefacts will be deposited with SCCAS under code ERL 213, along with the site archive. A summary of information from this project, set out within Appendix D, will be entered onto the OASIS online database of archaeological projects in Britain.

January Visits

- 4.5 Topsoil stripping was monitored at the larger southern end of the site over the course of three visits (13th, 15th and 20th). Most of the site was truncated by previous development/ levelling, but in undisturbed areas at the southern end four pits were identified, excavated and recorded. Two of the features were sampled for paleoenvironmental remains. Approximately 0.15m of topsoil, with approximately 0.35m of made ground was removed above the geological horizon. Where visible the observed geology consisted of a yellow-orange sand with chalk patches.

May and July Visits

- 4.6 Two soakaways were excavated at the northern edge of the site which were monitored over two visits, one for each soakaway. This involved the removal of c.0.6m of made ground crush which lay directly over the geological horizon. A single pit was identified in the north-eastern soakaway on 26th May,, and two postholes in the north-western soakaway on were identified on 24th July,.

September Visits

- 4.7 Two visits were made to the site in September (3rd and 9th) to monitor a small pit to facilitate boring for service cables under the road on the northern side of Bedford road, with an additional service trench leading to the substation c.25m to the north west. The hole measured 3.5m by 0.65m and was excavated to a depth of 0.9m. 0.16m of topsoil overlay 0.6m of made ground which directly overlay the geological horizon. No finds or archaeological deposits were identified. The service trench was hand excavated to a depth of 0.6m, a visit was made when approximately 75% of the trench

was excavated, as seen in the pit previously monitored, the topsoil overlay deposits of modern made ground material, which the trench had not penetrated. Due to the level of disturbance in this area it was deemed unnecessary to monitor the full length.

5. RESULTS (FIGS 2-6)

5.1 The natural geological substrate consisting of yellow orange sand with chalk patches, was revealed intermittently at the southern end of the site an average depth of 0.5m below present ground level and at the northern end of the site 0.6m below the made ground. This was overlain by modern made ground and mixed topsoil deposits across the area. A total of five pits and two postholes were identified throughout the works.. The full context list with detailed context descriptions is located within Appendix A. Below is a brief summary of each feature.

5.2 Pit 2000 was located at the south end of the site and was sub-oval in plan, elongated north-west to south-east, with steep slightly convex sides and a narrow flat base. It measured 1.03m x 0.77m and 0.4m deep and contained a single fill, 2001 which was a dark grey loose silty sand with common charcoal flecks and occasional small fragments of heat-altered flint (too small to retain). No finds were recovered. Sample 200 from this fill identified only wood charcoal with no other dating or paleoenvironmental remains.



Plate 1. Pit 2000, looking north-east, 1m scale.

- 5.3 Pit 2002 was located at the south end of the site and was sub-circular in plan with moderately sloping concave side and a concave base. It measured 0.5m x 0.48m and 0.18m deep and contained a single fill, I 2003 which was a pale grey loose silty sand with no inclusions. No finds were recovered.



Plate 2. Pit 2002, looking north-west, 0.4m scale.

- 5.4 Pit 2004 was located at the south end of the site and was roughly circular in plan with moderately sloping concave side and a concave base. It measured 0.44m x 0.40m and 0.12m deep and contained a single fill, 2005 a pale grey loose silty sand with no inclusions. No finds were recovered.



Plate 3. Pit 2004, looking north-west, 0.4m scale.

5.5 Pit 2006 was located at the south end of the site and was sub-oval in plan, elongated north-west to south-east, with shallow concave sides and a flat to slight concave base. It measured 0.98m x 0.72m and 0.18m deep and contained a single fill, 2007 a dark grey loose silty sand with occasional small charcoal flecks and occasional small fragments of heat-altered flint (too small to retain). No finds were recovered. Sample 201 from this fill identified no paleoenvironmental remains.



Plate 4. Pit 2006, looking north-east, 1m scale.



Plate 5. Pit 2008, looking north, 1m scale.

- 5.6 Pit 2008 was located at the north end of the site, it was half circular in plan and was obscured by the northern bulk. It had steep slightly convex sides and a narrow U-shaped base and measured 1.6m in length, 0.9m in width and 0.7m in depth and contained two fills. Basal fill 2009 was a dark grey brown loose sand with occasional charcoal flecks and occasional small flint inclusions, it measured 1.6m x 0.9m and 0.7m deep. Heat-altered flint was recovered from 2009. Top fill 2010 was a mid-red brown soft sand with occasional charcoal flecks, 0.2m deep and contained no finds.
- 5.7 Posthole 2011 was located at the north end of the site and sub-oval in plan 0.39m x 0.3m x 0.24m deep. It had steep slightly concave sides leading to a concave base and contained two fills. The basal fill 2012 consisted of a mid brown grey soft sand with occasional small flint inclusions, it was sealed by top fill 2013 which consisted of a dark blackish grey soft silty sand, with occasional chalk flecks. Neither fill yielded any finds.



Plate 6. Posthole 2011, looking north-east, 0.3m scale.

- 5.8 Posthole 2014 was located to the north of the site, approximately 1.5m to the south-west of posthole 2011. It was sub-ovular in plan, 0.45m x 0.4m x 0.32m deep with slightly concave sides to a flat base and contained two fills. The basal fill 2015 consisted of a mid grey soft silty sand with no significant inclusions, which overlaid

the top fill 2016 which consisted of a very mixed light yellow brown soft sand and dark grey brown silty sand with occasional chalk flecks



Plate 7. Posthole 2014, looking north-east, 0.3m scale.

6. THE FINDS

- 6.1 The only finds recovered from the works were seven heat-altered flints from pit 2008, examination of these (see Appendix B) suggests that they result from incidental exposure to fire during occupation activity rather than as the result of flint heating (e.g. for a pot-boiler)

7. THE BIOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Charcoal fragments were recovered from environmental samples from pits 2000 and 2006. Both were undated pits and whilst the quantity of charcoal attests to a possible hearth in the vicinity (and associated with the nearby Iron Age occupation) neither provided evidence for dietary or agricultural activities.

8. DISCUSSION

- 8.1 Although none of the seven features yielded any datable evidence it is likely that they are related to the Iron Age settlement which was previously excavated at the site.

This phase of work has confirmed that the intense settlement activity does not extend beyond the areas previously subject to excavation.

9. CA PROJECT TEAM

Fieldwork was undertaken by Rebecca Smart and Michael Green. The report was written by Rebecca Smart and Michael Green. The finds and biological evidence reports were written by Michael Green and Anna West respectively. The illustrations were prepared by Ryan Wilson. The archive has been compiled and prepared for deposition by Clare Wootton. The project was managed for CA by Jo Caruth.

10. REFERENCES

- BGS (British Geological Survey) 2020 *Geology of Britain Viewer* <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> Accessed 13 January 2020
- Beverton, A., 2013, *Post-excavation Assessment Report. Windsor Circle, ERL 213 and Halifax Street, ERL 217*. SCCAS Report no. 2013/066
- CA (Cotswold Archaeology) 2019 *New Running Track, RAF Lakenheath, Eriswell, Suffolk: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*.
- Craven, J., 2011a, *Archaeological Evaluation Report, Windsor Circle, ERL 213*. SCCAS Report no. 2011/001
- Craven, J., 2011b, *Archaeological Evaluation Report, Windsor Circle, ERL 213*. SCCAS Report no. 2011/060
- Craven, J., 2011c, *Archaeological Evaluation Report, Windsor Circle, ERL 213*. SCCAS Report no. 2011/158

APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Context No.	Feature Type	Type	Fill of	Description	L (m)	W (m)	Depth/thickness (m)
2000	Pit	Cut		Sub-oval in plan with a rough NW-SE alignment, with steep, slightly convex sides to a flat base. The very top of the feature is slightly disturbed by modern.	1.03	0.77	0.4
2001	Pit	Fill	2000	Dark blackish grey loose silty sand with common charcoal flecks and occasional fragments of heat-altered flints. Silting bands were present towards the base of the feature.	1.03	0.77	0.4
2002	Pit	Cut		Sub-rounded in plan with moderately steep sides to a concave base.	0.5	0.48	0.18
2003	Pit	Fill	2002	Single fill consisting of a pale grey loose silty sand with no significant inclusions. Silting bands present.	0.5	0.48	0.18
2004	Pit	Cut	2004	Circular in plan with moderately sloping concave sides and a concave base. Single fill seen.	0.44	0.4	0.12
2005	Pit	Fill	2004	Single fill consisting of a pale grey loose silty sand with no significant inclusions. Silting bands present.	0.44	0.4	0.12
2006	Pit	Cut		Oval in plan elongated NW-SE with shallow concave sides and a concave base.	0.98	0.72	0.18
2007	Pit	Fill	2006	Dark blackish grey loose silty sand with common charcoal flecks and occasional fragments of heat-altered flints. Silting bands were present towards the base of the feature.	0.98	0.72	0.18
2008	Pit	Cut		Half circular in plan obscured by north western bulk with steep slight convex sides and a narrow U shape base. Two fills seen.	1.6	0.9+	0.7
2009	Pit	Fill	2008	Dark grey brown soft sand with occasional charcoal fleck and small flint inclusion. Basal fill of 2.	1.6	0.9+	0.7
2010	Pit	Fill	2008	Mid red brown soft sand with occasional small charcoal flecks. Top fill of 2.	0.9	1.2	0.2
2011	Posthole	Cut		Sub-oval posthole in plan with steep flat to concave sides to a concave base, 2 fills identified.	0.39	0.3	0.24
2012	Posthole	Fill	2011	Basal fill of posthole consisting of mid brownish grey soft sand with occasional small flint inclusions, clear clarity.	0.39	0.3	0.24
2013	Posthole	Fill	2011	Top fill of posthole consisting of dark grey black soft sandy silt with occasional chalk flecks, clear clarity.	0.39	0.3	0.13
2014	Posthole	Cut		Sub-circular posthole with straight to concave steep sides to a concave base.	0.45	0.4	0.32
2015	Posthole	Fill	2014	Basal fill of posthole consisting of mid grey soft silty sand with no significant inclusions.	0.45	0.4	0.1
2016	Posthole	Fill	2014	Top fill of posthole consisting of soft mixed light yellow brown sand and dark grey brown silty sand with occasional chalk flecks.	0.45	0.4	0.28

APPENDIX B: HEAT ALTERED FINIT

By Michael Green

Methodology

Each piece of flint was examined and recorded in the table below. The material was classified by *type* with numbers of pieces and corticated and thermal fractures commented on in the discussion.

Introduction

Seven pieces of heat-altered flint weighing 436g were recovered from a single feature. High temperature heat-altered flint and low temperature heat-altered flint was found. The high temperature heat-altered material was a light grey discoloured flint which was highly fractured. The low temperature heat-altered flint was discoloured red or black and was moderately fractured.

Context Number	Type	Cortex %	Number	Weight (g)
2009, Pit 2008	Large high temperature heat-altered flint	50-90	3	343
2009, Pit 2008	Small low temperature heat-altered flint	30-90	4	93
Total			7	436

Table. Heat-altered flint and stone summarised by type

Discussion

Seven heat-altered flints were found in the basal fill of a single pit 2008. Both high and low temperate heat-altered flint was recovered making it likely that the flint was most likely naturally occurring and accidentally subjected to heat from a hearth, fire pit or surface fire.

Conclusion

The heat-altered flint and stone found on site is most likely naturally occurring and accidently heated by being in close proximity to fire. This has probably been accidently incorporated into the fill from surface deposits and the small amounts discovered does not suggest activities requiring intense firing such as flint temper production or water heating.

APPENDIX C: THE PLANT MACROFOSSIL EVIDENCE

By Anna West

Introduction and Methods

Bulk samples were taken from two undated pit fills. Both samples were processed in full in order to assess the quality of preservation of plant remains and their potential to provide useful data as part of further archaeological investigations.

The samples were processed using manual water flotation/washover and the flots were collected in a 300µm mesh sieve. The dried flots were scanned using a binocular microscope at x10 magnification and the presence of any plant remains or artefacts is noted below. The non-floating residues were collected in a 1mm mesh and sorted when dry. Any artefacts/ecofacts recovered were retained for inclusion in the finds total.

Results

Pit fill 2001 (sample 200) produced 180ml of flot, pit fill 2007 (sample 201) produced 20ml. These were made up solely of wood charcoal.

No charred or un-charred plant macrofossils were present other than wood charcoal. The charcoal recovered is flaked and some fragments appeared vitrified, possibly through being exposed to high temperatures. Generally, the fragments present within sample 200 were suitable for species identification or radiocarbon dating if required, however the material recovered from sample 201 was too comminuted to be suitable for further analysis.

The presence of large quantities of wood charcoal does suggest that there may have been a hearth or oven in the vicinity.

Conclusions and recommendations for further work

In general, the samples were poor in terms of identifiable material, with only wood charcoal being present.

It is not recommended that any further work, other than possibly that stated above, should be carried out on the flot material from these samples, however, the flots should be retained as part of the site archive.

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OASIS ID: cotswold2-403688

Project details

Project name	ERL 213, New Running Track, RAF Lakenheath
Short description of the project	Watching brief.
Project dates	Start: 13-01-2020 End: 09-09-2020
Previous/future work	Yes / No
Any associated project reference codes	ERL 213 - HER event no.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Vacant Land 1 - Vacant land previously developed
Monument type	PIT Uncertain
Monument type	POSTHOLE Uncertain
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Voluntary/self-interest

Project location

Country	England
Site location	SUFFOLK FOREST HEATH ERISWELL ERL 213, New Running Track, RAF Lakenheath
Postcode	IP27 9GE
Study area	2.35 Hectares
Site coordinates	TL 573130 280080 51.927859748194 0.288195985097 51 55 40 N 000 17 17 E Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Cotswold Archaeology
Project brief originator	Cotswold Archaeology
Project design originator	Jo Caruth
Project director/manager	Jo Caruth
Project supervisor	Rebecca Smart
Type of sponsor/funding body	Contractor
Name of sponsor/funding body	Keir for Defence Infrastructure Organisation

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Suffolk HER
Digital Archive ID	ERL 213
Digital Media available	"Database","Images raster / digital photography","Spreadsheets","Survey","Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Suffolk HER
Paper Archive ID	ERL 213
Paper Media available	"Context sheet","Drawing","Photograph","Plan","Report","Section","Survey"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	New Running Track, RAF Lakenheath, Eriswell, Suffolk, Archaeological Monitoring Report
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Smart, R
Other bibliographic details	Cotswold Report Number SU0077_1
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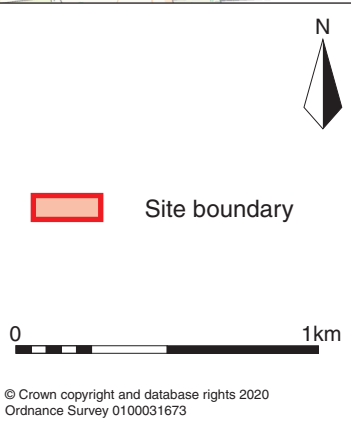
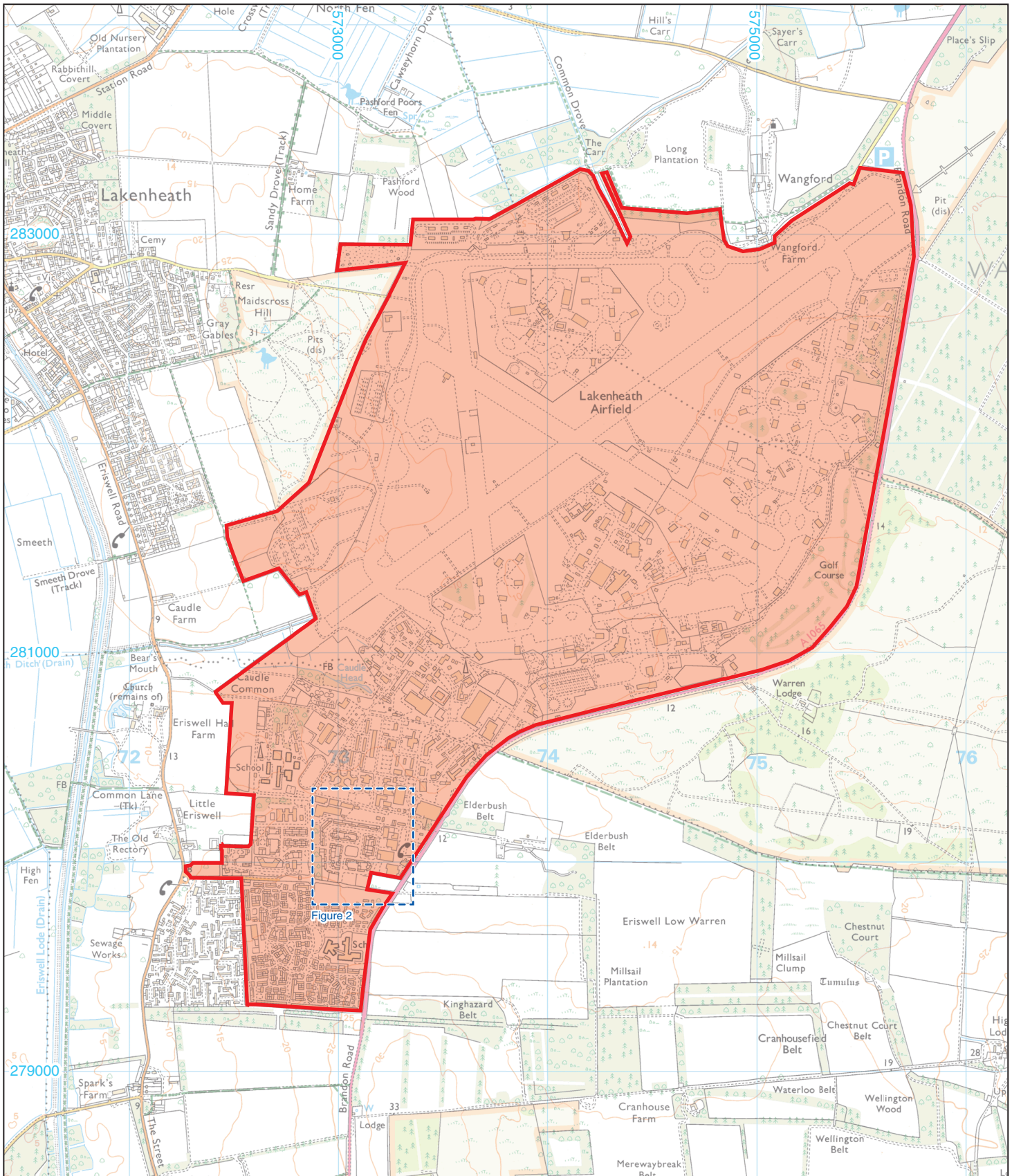
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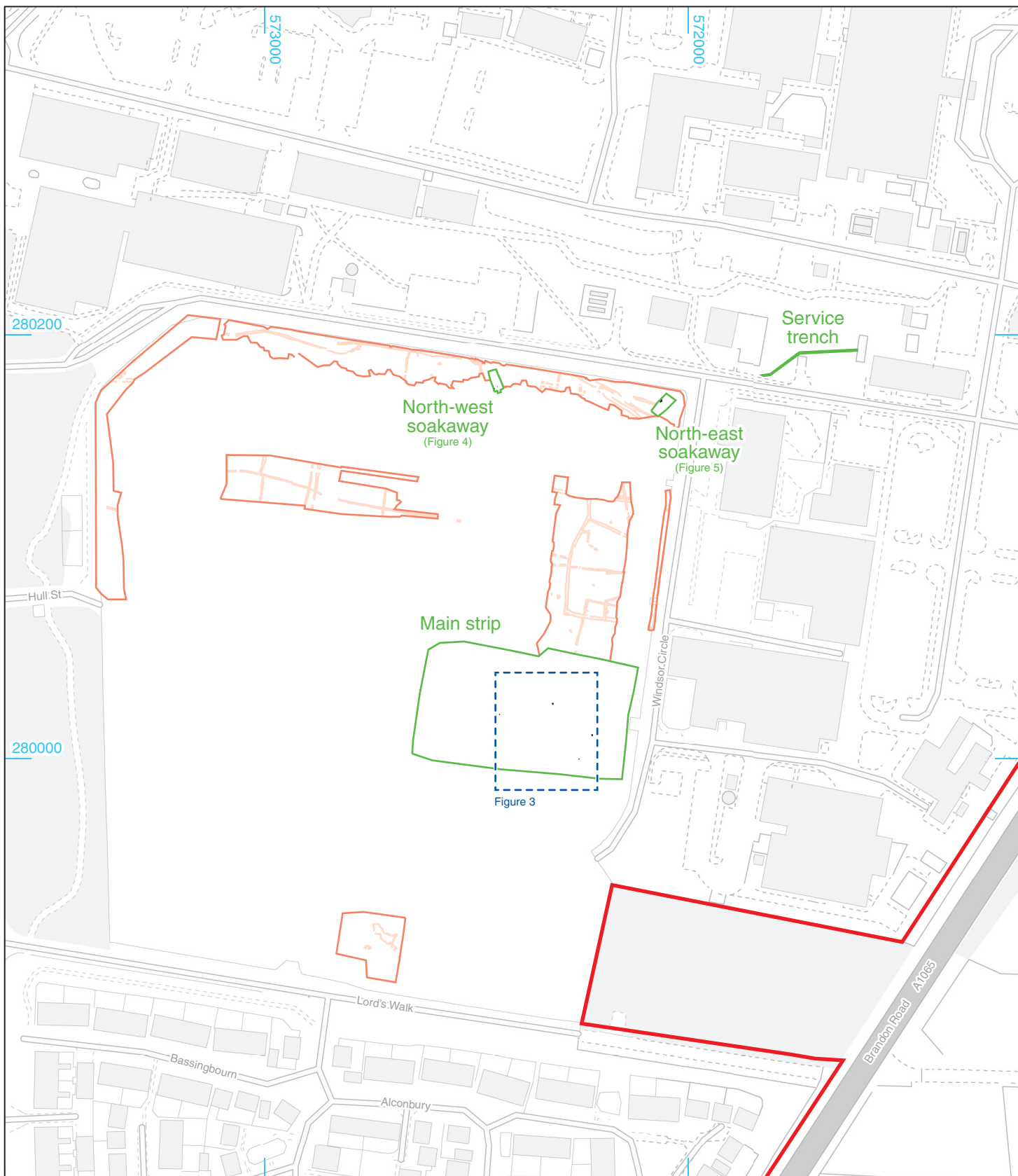
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PROJECT TITLE
 New Running Track (ERL 213), RAF Lakenheath, Suffolk

FIGURE TITLE
 Site location plan

DRAWN BY	RW	PROJECT NO.	SU0077	FIGURE NO.
CHECKED BY	DJB	DATE	14/09/2020	
APPROVED BY	RS	SCALE@A4	1:25,000	1

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- Site boundary
- Excavation area (CA 2020)
- Archaeological feature (CA 2020)
- Excavation area (SCC 2012)
- Archaeological feature (CA 2012)



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FIGURE TITLE

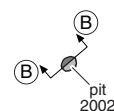
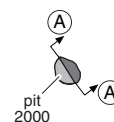
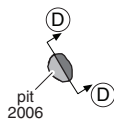
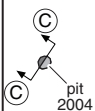
Trench plan showing excavated features and previous archaeological works

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 CHECKED BY DJB DATE 14/09/2020
 APPROVED BY RS SCALE@A4 1:2500

FIGURE NO.




2

0 1:2500 100m



280000



-  Excavation area (CA 2020)
-  Archaeological feature (excavated / unexcavated)
-  Section line



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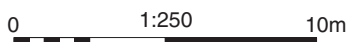
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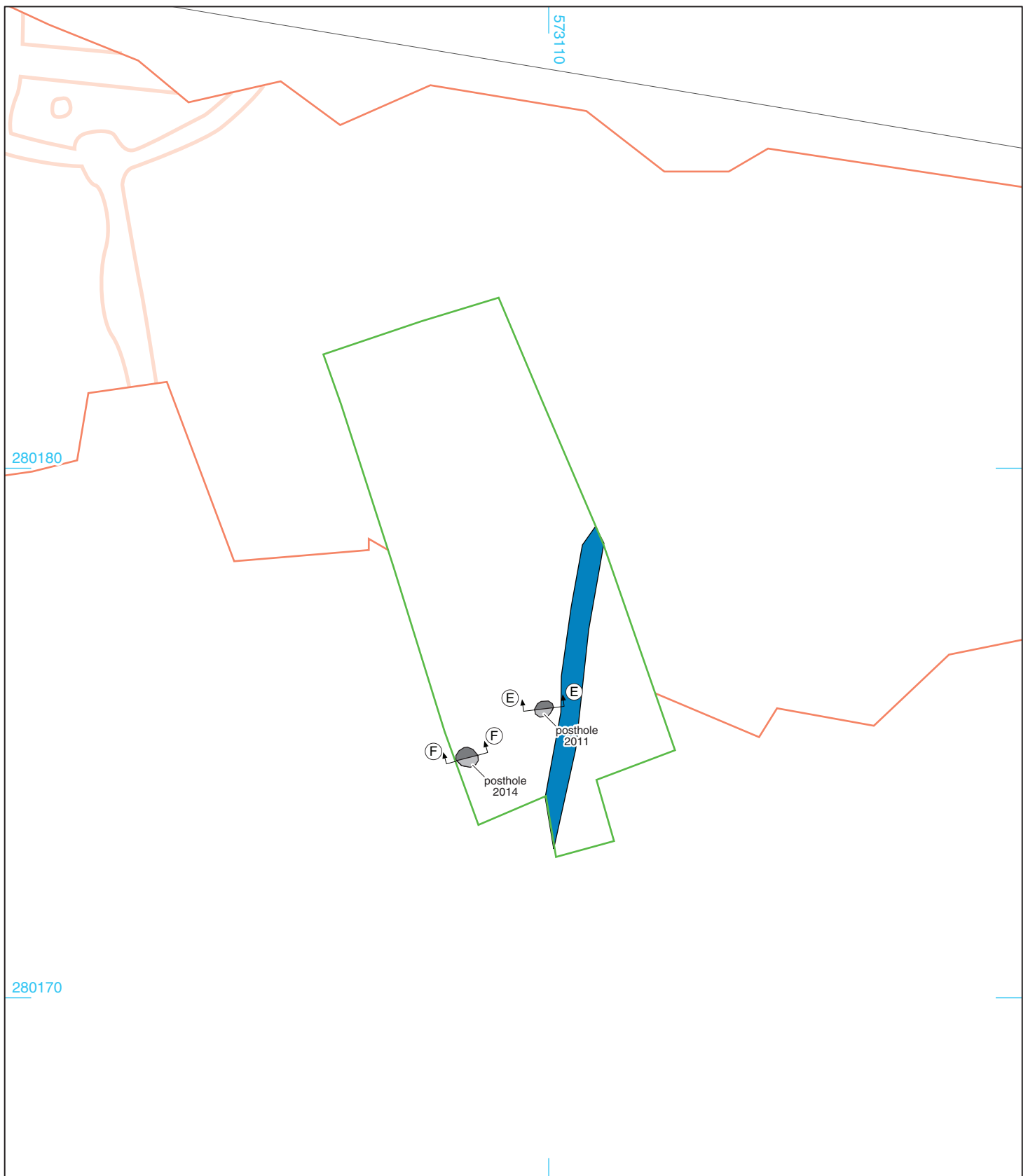
Main strip: plan


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FIGURE NO.

3





-  Excavation area (CA 2020)
-  Archaeological feature (excavated / unexcavated)
-  Modern feature
-  Section line

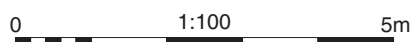
-  Excavation area (SCC 2012)
-  Archaeological feature (CA 2012)



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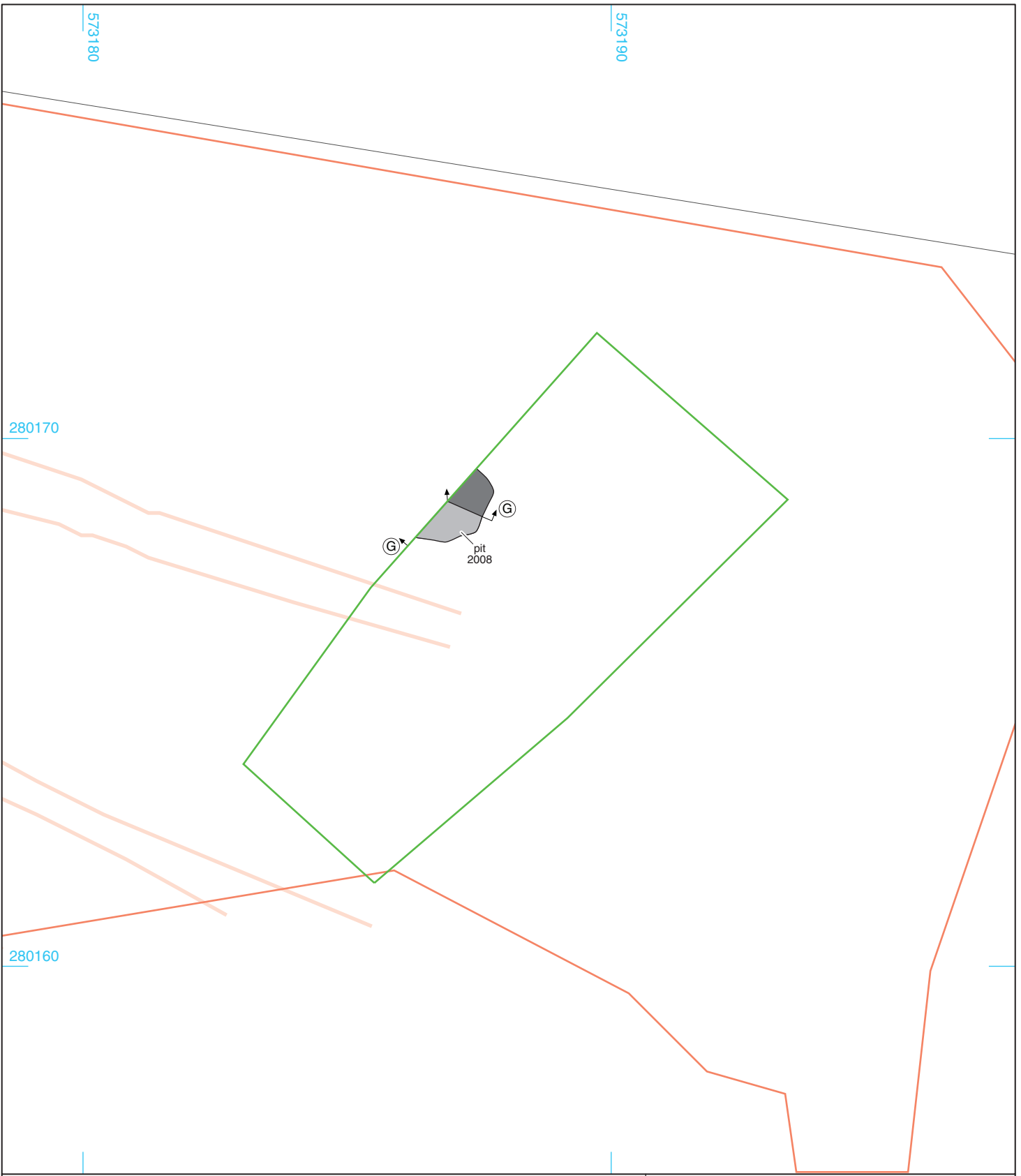
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 New Running Track (ERL 213), RAF Lakenheath, Suffolk






FIGURE TITLE
 North-west soakaway: plan



DRAWN BY RW PROJECT NO. SU0077
 CHECKED BY DJB DATE 14/09/2020
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FIGURE NO.
4



-  Excavation area (CA 2020)
-  Archaeological feature (excavated / unexcavated)
-  Section line
-  Excavation area (SCC 2012)
-  Archaeological feature (CA 2012)

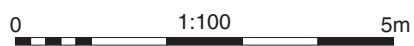



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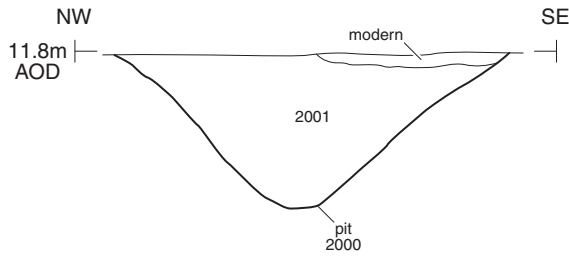
FIGURE TITLE
North-east soakaway: plan

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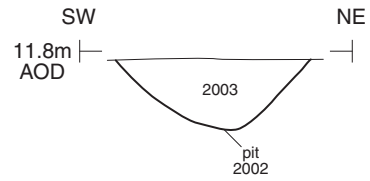


Main strip

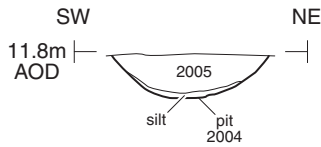
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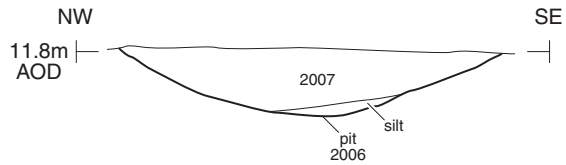
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Section CC

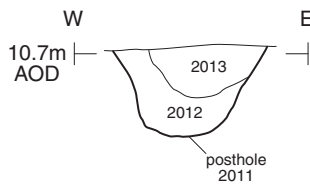


Section DD

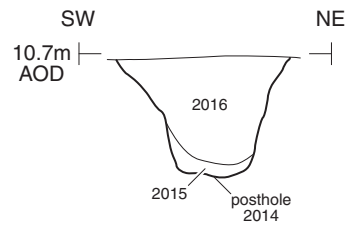


North-west soakaway

Section EE

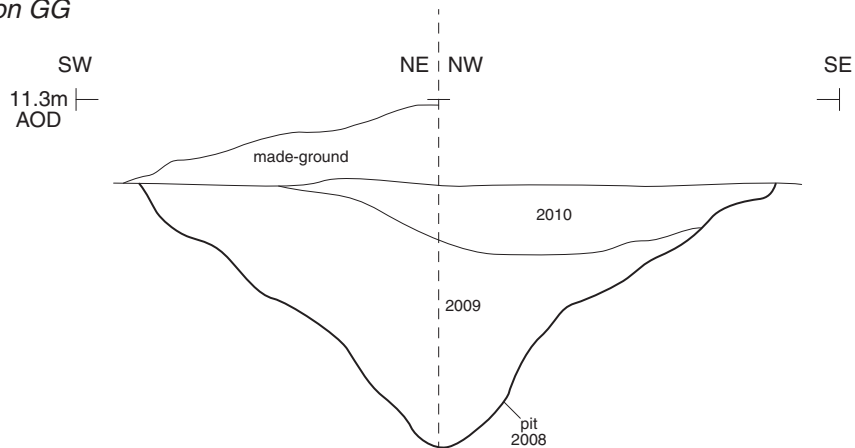


Section FF



North-east soakaway

Section GG



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FIGURE TITLE

Sections

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CHECKED BY	DJB	DATE	14/09/2020	6
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